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WILLIAM H. A. CARR LANCER ORIGINAL 72-639 50¢

HOLLYWOOD TRAGEDY ★

FROM FATTY ARBUCKLE TO MARILYN MONROE

A PRIZE-WINNING REPORTER DIGS INTO THE FRONT PAGE STORIES AND COMES UP WITH THE REAL FACTS

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TRAGEDY OFF SCREEN

Because of the tragic, untimely death of Marilyn Monroe, a reporter was assigned the task of digging into the files of Hollywood scandals as far back as the Fatty Arbuckle rape case, to uncover the causes and events leading up to these real life dramas. Dramas that surpass anything put on the screen.

You will be taken behind the scenes of Hollywood's most sensational scandals involving such famous stars as Thelma Todd, Lana Turner, Errol Flynn, William Desmond Taylor, Charlie Chaplin, Ingrid Bergman and many others.

Is the glittering, tinsel dream world of Hollywood to blame for their scandals or were these personalities doomed for other, deeper reasons? Mr. Carr supplies some answers in this shocking report that pulls no punches.

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HOLLYWOOD TRAGEDY

WILLIAM H. A. CARR

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I — Introduction: Marilyn Monroe: *The Star-Crossed*

THIS IS, unabashedly, a book of scandals, from Olive Thomas to Marilyn Monroe.

Sex is in this book. Crime fills many of its pages. All of the subject matter is sensational.

The popular hypocrisy of our times says that none of these things should be confessed. Books can be published about sex, crime, and other sensational matters, but they should always display a pious facade, like a Hollywood movie that always carefully punishes its leading character in the last reel after showing the appetizing and rewarding pleasures of his sins in the previous reels.

One result of this attitude is an historical view of Hollywood that bears little semblance to reality. Read almost any of the standard histories of the motion picture industry and you'll get the impression that everyone in it—from producers to stagehands—was a serious, sober, stable, dedicated disciple of the film as an art form.

In a very few years, those who wish to find out something about Marilyn Monroe, for example, will get a completely distorted view of what she was and what she meant to the motion picture industry and to the moviegoers of her time.

This is as much a fantasy, as untrue to life—but not nearly as entertaining—as the standard film musical of the 1930s. Hollywood was, and is, to a considerable (but lesser) extent, a city of dreams. This was Cinderella City, a place of legends, where a buxom girl in a tight sweater might be "discovered" by a talent scout and be turned into a movie queen overnight, where a kid from the slums might suddenly find him-

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self earning millions of dollars, where people were gay and beautiful and bright and glamorous—a world where an illegitimate girl with the drab name of Norma Jean, a product of wretched foster homes where she had been crushed and debauched, might be magically transformed into the Queen of Beauty, Marilyn Monroe. It was, in Hortense Powdermaker's felicitous phrase, "the dream factory," but the factory itself became a part of the dreams it produced, so that it was well nigh impossible to distinguish between cause and effect, between the product and the producer, between the dream and the dreamer.

The dream created the Marilyn Monroes, and they, in turn, became part of the dream, and helped elucidate and elaborate the dream to others. And in time the dream consumed them. Olive Thomas, the Ziegfeld Girl described by a foremost artist as "the most beautiful girl in the world," unhappily married to Mary Pickford's brother Jack, enjoyed a second honeymoon with him, went on a round of Parisian dives, and swallowed poison after they returned to their hotel. They called it an accident.

Clara Bow's mind broke when her career began to hit the skids. Carole Landis, weary of her own leg art, burdened with debt, worried about her fading career, heartbroken because the married star she loved wouldn't marry her, committed suicide with sleeping pills.

Carole Landis killed herself in 1948. That year, for the first time, movie audiences saw Marilyn Monroe on the screen.

Marilyn Monroe was the epitome of the movie star. In each generation there is just one star who outshines all the others with a brilliance beyond comparison. It's a difficult phenomenon to explain. The star usually isn't the best actor or actress, nor the smartest, nor even the most attractive. There is some indefinable quality that arouses a special kind of interest and enthusiasm in the audience. Mary Pickford was the first star of this magnitude. After her came Clara Bow. Then Jean Harlow. Then there was a hiatus of about a decade—probably because of the war—before the next queen came along: Marilyn Monroe.

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It is nothing short of miraculous that Marilyn Monroe ever emerged on the screen. Everything was against her from birth —and even before. Both of her grandparents on her mother's side had to be committed to insane asylums. An uncle killed himself. Her mother became psychotic and had to be hospitalized five years after the girl's birth; she was still in custodial care when Marilyn Monroe was buried.

As for her father, he was as nebulous as the fathers of most illegitimate offspring. When Marilyn was born in Los Angeles General Hospital on June 1, 1926, her name was listed as Norma Jean Mortenson, but her mother was listed as Mrs. Gladys Baker, age twenty-four. Marilyn didn't know she was a bastard until she was sixteen, when she applied for a marriage license. After she became a star, she began a search for her father, with the aid of private detectives and newspaper stories. Whether she ever found him is a question that probably never will be answered. In 1929 an Edward Mortenson was killed in a motorcycle accident in Youngstown, Ohio; Marilyn was told he had been her father. In 1950, she was told that a dairy farmer who lived about one hundred and fifty miles south of Los Angeles was her father; she talked to him on the telephone, but he refused to see her. As her drama coach, Natasha Lytess, who was present, recalled, "She pleaded with him to let her see him. He refused. She gave him her telephone number. He never called her." On another occasion Marilyn was told that her father was a Los Angeles civic leader. And Grace McKee, her mother's oldest friend, once told her that it was still another man, that he was still alive, and that he had wanted to adopt his unsanctified daughter but Marilyn's mother wouldn't let him because she hated him so. Whoever he was, Marilyn never stopped searching for him, in both a real and a psychological sense. She never stopped feeling the pain of his loss, the terrible need for him. She tried to find him in men, and failed. And yet there is a kind of awful appropriateness in her lack of a father. Her mother worked in the film industry as a film cutter at Columbia and at RKO-Radio. Perhaps—certainly in a symbolic sense —the motion picture industry itself fathered this beautiful girl, by a kind of cultural parthenogenesis.

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The movies were the only bright spot in the pathetic life of Norma Jean Baker, the name under which she was carried on the Los Angeles welfare rolls. She was a ward of the county, which paid twenty dollars a month to foster parents to take care of her. In the memory of the adult Marilyn Monroe, there was an almost constantly changing succession of foster homes, although investigators later could find records of only three (there could have been more). There were enough to rob the girl of any sense of security. "I guess I wanted love more than anything else in the world at that time," Marilyn later told an interviewer. She didn't find it. When she was seven, she made the mistake of calling a foster mother "Mama," but the woman sharply rebuked her. The woman snapped, "I'm not your Mama. I'm not related to you at all. You just board out here." Marilyn herself once wrote a vivid account of the confusion and misery of it all. "What one family would tell me was wrong, another family would tell me was right," she said. "One place where I lived they made me recite and sign a pledge: 'I promise, God helping me, not to buy, drink, sell, or give alcoholic liquor while I live; from all tobaccos I'll abstain and never take God's name in vain.' Another family let me have empty liquor bottles to play with. Still another family made me pray every night that I wouldn't wake up in hell. I always felt insecure and in the way. But most of all—I just felt scared."

All the nameless fears and anxieties were multiplied, mixed up, augmented, and spread in shrieking colors on the quivering fabric of her mind like a nightmare montage by an event that occurred sometime in her childhood. It happened in one of her foster homes, which happened to be a rooming house. One night, when little Norma Jean was putting away some linens, one of the boarders, an elderly, relatively prosperous man who wore dark suits, a gold watch and chain, and an elk's tooth, motioned to her that he wanted her to come to him. Wonderingly, she went to the door of his room. He took her hand, smilingly, led her into the room, and closed the door, bolting it. He took off his coat and vest, hung them up carefully, sat down in a chair, and told the little girl to come and sit on his lap. He told her they'd play a little game.

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He raped her.

Afterwards, the shaking child tried to tell her foster mother about it, although she'd been given a nickel to keep her mouth shut. But her foster mother called her a liar and slapped her across the mouth. And ever afterwards Norma Jean Mortenson stammered.

This is the story that Marilyn Monroe told a number of people. She told one that it happened when she was six. On another occasion she gave her age at the time as eight. Sometimes she said nine or eleven. Maybe it didn't happen at all; people sometimes have fantasies about childhood rape that are as real as life. The likelihood is that it did happen. But whether it did or didn't actually occur is really immaterial; reality or fantasy, it exerted a powerful influence on the rest of her life.

In the gothic terror-world of her childhood, the movies beckoned brightly, like a fairy godmother to Cinderella. "When I was five," she once told *Life*, "I think that's when I started wanting to be an actress—I loved to play. . . . When I was older I used to go to Grauman's Chinese Theater and try to fit my foot in the prints in the cement there. And I'd say, 'Oh, oh, my foot's too big. I guess that's out. . . . It was the creative part that kept me going—trying to be an actress. I enjoy acting when you really hit it right. And I guess I've always had too much fantasy to be only a housewife." She lived on movie fan magazines. She read them avidly, and "believed every word of them," as she later said. Her favorite star, inevitably, was Jean Harlow, whom she would one day succeed as No. 1 sex symbol.

Until she was twelve, the future sex queen of the cinema was so skinny and sexless that she was called "Norma Jean, the Human Bean," and she even played a boy's part in a drama production at Van Nuys High School. Then, one day, she borrowed a white sweater to wear to school. It happened to be a size or two smaller than she usually wore her sweaters. It made such a marked impression on the other kids at school that the following day Norma Jean experimented with makeup. "My arrival in school with painted lips, and darkened brows, and still encased in the magic sweater, started everybody buzzing," she recalled. She told *Life* how every-

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thing was transformed for her at that time: "Suddenly everything opened up. Even the girls paid a little attention to me, just because they thought, 'Hmmmm, she's to be dealt with!' And I had this long walk to school, two and a half miles to school and two and a half miles back—it was just sheer pleasure. Every fellow honked his horn—you know, workers driving to work, waving, you know, and I'd wave back. The world became friendly."

Too friendly for the peace of mind of her legal guardian, and of the woman with whom Norma Jean was living at the time. They decided she had altogether too much sex appeal. The safest thing seemed to them to get her out of circulation.

So a marriage was arranged for her. The groom was James Dougherty, twenty-one, an aircraft worker who was dark and handsome. "We were introduced by her foster aunt," he once said. "We went out together about six months before we got married. Being an actress wasn't even on her mind then."

Eighteen days after her sixteenth birthday, the marriage took place. The date was June 19, 1942. They had an argument on their wedding night because Jim didn't like the way she had joined a conga line in a night club while celebrating the wedding—nor the way the men had admired her. Two years later, Dougherty joined the Merchant Marine and was assigned to Catalina Island, where Norma Jean lived with him. She was still wearing tight sweaters and slacks, the men were still watching her, and Dougherty was still getting upset about it.

And then Dougherty was shipped overseas. And Norma Jean became a photographer's model.

Like so many of the major events in Norma Jean's life, it began accidentally. With her husband overseas, the young Mrs. Dougherty had gone to work in the plant of the Radio Plane Parts Company in Burbank, which was engaged in war production. One day in 1945 the Army sent photographer David Conover to the plant to take pictures to lift the morale of the soldiers overseas. She had a sweater—a tight one, of course—in her locker. She looked so good in the pictures that Conover told her she ought to be a professional model. She promptly signed up with the Blue Books Model Agency.

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One day Andre de Dienes, who later came to be one of the best known photographers in the business, put in a call to the agency for a model. Later that day the door bell rang at his apartment in the famous Garden of Allah apartment house. "There came this lovely little girl in a pink sweater and checkered slacks," he said after her death. "Right away I fell in love with this girl."

She told him that she was married, but her husband was away in the Merchant Marine. She didn't love her husband, she said.

Andre and Norma Jean went on a month-long trip up the coast. She posed for his camera against every conceivable kind of background—rocks, waters, snow, mountains, highways. He found that she was a good worker, but not strong. "She was frail, mentally and physically," he said. She had no defenses against the brutalities of the world. It was a quality that the other men in her life later would note and comment upon. "She was a sensitive, sweet little girl," Andre summed up.

Andre had to go to New York on business. While he was away, she went to Las Vegas. There, on October 2, 1946, she obtained a divorce from Dougherty. Two men were in for a blow. Dougherty first got word of the divorce in a letter from his young wife's attorney. "It reached me in Yangtze," he said. "I was kind of shook up at that. . . . I sent a cablegram cancelling my allotment to her, and I went to Shanghai and had a ball." Andre de Dienes headed back to the West Coast after an absence of five months. "I phoned from New Mexico," he told a friend, "and she said, 'Andre, please don't come. I can't marry you. Forgive me.' "

When de Dienes arrived in Hollywood, he made a discreet inquiry or two. He found she was involved with someone else. "I knew it was all over," he said sadly.

De Dienes' photos had been appearing in all the men's magazines. Howard Hughes, the indefatigable "discoverer" of appetizing women happened to see one of them. He attracted attention to Norma Jean, but Ben Lyon at 20th Century-Fox arranged her first screen test.

The cameraman was Leon Shamroy. He never forgot that test. "I got a cold chill," he said. "This girl had something I

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hadn't seen since silent pictures. She had a kind of fantastic beauty like Gloria Swanson, when a movie star had to look beautiful, and she got sex on a piece of film like Jean Harlow. This is the first girl who looked like one of those lush stars of the silent era."

It was Lyon who gave Norma Jean her new name, after 20th Century-Fox signed her. "I told him that my mother's maiden name was Monroe and said that I had always liked that name," Marilyn later explained. "Besides, I added, I am a direct descendant of President Monroe. 'All right, Monroe's it,' he said. 'Now a first name. You're a remarkable combination of two different people I knew very well, Jean Harlow and Marilyn Miller. Marilyn sounds better with Monroe than Jean. That's it. Marilyn Monroe.' "

She had the name, but not the fame. Her contract with 20th Century-Fox, she later said, "was like my first vaccination. It didn't take." She only got a one-word walk-on in one movie, and that ended up on a cutting-room floor. After six months her option was picked up and she got a salary boost to one hundred and fifty dollars a week, but six months later she was dropped from the studio's rolls.

Then she enrolled in the Actors' Lab, a workshop for aspiring youngsters. Her instructor there, conceded later that she'd never have expected Marilyn to make the big time.

After ten months in limbo, Marilyn got another contract in March 1948. Max Arnow of Columbia Pictures had seen her first screen test, done for 20th Century-Fox, and had been impressed. Arnow arranged for Natasha Lytess to be her dramatic coach. Marilyn played a burlesque stripper and sang a few songs in a grade B movie called *Ladies of the Chorus* Marilyn turned down the proposition and failed to get a contract ran out, Columbia dropped Marilyn, too.

During this time, Marilyn had been meeting men, inevitably. One studio boss suggested a party for two on his yacht. Marilyn turned down the proposition and failed to get a contract with that studio. Two days later, broke and desperate, she posed for a nude photograph for Tom Kelley. She got fifty

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dollars for photographs that would one day make a calendar famous.

She enjoyed a romance with the musical director of her first film. She was madly in love with him, but it was a one-sided passion, and ultimately he broke off the romance.

Joseph M. Schenck, chairman of the board at 20th Century-Fox, met her and began inviting her to his home. She later said, "I know the word around Hollywood was I was Joe Schenck's girl friend, but that s a lie. I went to his house because I liked Mr Schenck and I liked his food and it was better than the Studio Club food." And Schenck told Ezra Goodman, "She used to come here quite often for dinner. I think she liked to eat. We have good food here No, I never had any romantic thoughts about Marilyn and she never had any such thoughts about me."

Johnny Hyde, executive vice president of the influential William Morris Agency, did have romantic thoughts about Marilyn. Although he was fifty-three and she twenty-two, he became her acknowledged boy friend. He encouraged her and praised her talents. "Isn't it sad," Marilyn said to Maurice Zolotow, "here's Johnny in love with me and I didn't return his love? But Johnny was kind to me and I was faithful to him."

Friends like Schenck and Hyde were very powerful boosts to a girl with ambition in Hollywood.

Arthur Hornblow, Jr. and John Huston were looking for a blonde to play Louis Calhern's girl friend in *The Asphalt Jungle*. Lucille Ryman, a casting agent for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, was helping in the hunt. She saw that first screen test of Marilyn's (Marilyn certainly got a lot of mileage out of that test!) and was impressed. She mentioned Marilyn to producer Hornblow and director Huston.

There the matter might have ended, with no job for Marilyn, if it hadn't been for her friendships. Hyde immediately arranged for Marilyn to meet Hornblow and Huston. They thought she'd be just right for the role. Marilyn got the part, but she didn't get any billing at all in a picture that was destined to be both a critical and a box office success. But at a sneak preview in Westwood Village, the audience whooped it

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up whenever she appeared on the screen. And almost all the preview questionnaires filled out by the audience asked, "Who was the blonde?"

But Hollywood's bigger brains still didn't get the message. M-G-M passed her up. Her next stop was 20th Century-Fox again, where she had a small part in *All About Eve* as a dumb blonde who "is a graduate of the Copacabana School of Dramatic Art." But 20th Century-Fox didn't nail her to a contract, either. Not at first.

But one day, while Marilyn was working briefly at 20th, she and other stars and starlets were ordered to attend a party for exhibitors. The other stars were almost trampled in the rush of the exhibitors to get next to Marilyn. They asked her, "And what movies are *you* going to be in, Miss Monroe?" And she told them sweetly, "You'll have to ask my bosses that." Spyros Skouras, the president, asked who the girl was that the exhibitors were going crazy over. They told him. Then he asked his stooges what movies she was in. They nervously informed him that she wasn't in anything. "The exhibitors like her," he growled. "If they like her, then the public likes her. No?" The flunkies nodded.

Skouras was even more impressed when he found that the fan mail for this girl, who wasn't even seen on the screen, was more voluminous than the fan mail for any other stars on the studio's payroll. He ordered her signed to a contract. It started at five hundred dollars a week and kept rising to a ceiling of fifteen hundred a week. She had a couple of trivial parts, and then another friendship intervened to make her a star.

Jerry Wald was casting *Clash by Night* at RKO. Sidney Skolsky, the powerful newspaper columnist, who had been a close friend of Marilyn since her earliest days in Hollywood, suggested her for a part. RKO borrowed her from 20th Century-Fox for three thousand for six weeks, an unbelievably cheap price. Marilyn got star billing and rave notices from the critics. She went back to the 20th Century-Fox lot a star.

In 1952, the nude calendar burst upon the world. At first the studio thought this meant a scandal that would ruin Mari-

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lyn's usefulness. Instead, it earned her publicity she could never have obtained ordinarily. Her quick wit helped to turn the tide of public opinion. When she was asked, "Didn't you have *anything* on while the pictures were taken?", she replied blandly, "The radio."

A few weeks later she admitted that her mother was in a mental hospital, although she had previously told everyone that her mother was dead. She told how she had been contributing to her mother's support all along. Again, the disclosure won sympathy for her, not hostility.

From that point on, Marilyn's career couldn't be stopped. She was MM, the great sex symbol.

Her personal life was less successful.

In 1950, while she was working on *All About Eve*, Marilyn saw a tall, gaunt, sad-faced man deep in conversation with Elia Kazan. She asked to be introduced to the tall man He was Arthur Miller, Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright (*All My Sons, Death of a Salesman*). They saw a great deal of each other during the next few weeks. Some friends of Marilyn understood that Miller was going to divorce his wife and marry her. If Marilyn thought that, she was in for heartbreak. Miller went back East—to his wife.

Two years later, at a time when she was lonelier than usual, a mutual friend introduced her to Joe DiMaggio. She had never heard of the great baseball star until then. In fact, when she was told he was the greatest baseball player since Babe Ruth, she asked, "Who's Babe Ruth?"

In 1954, she and Joe were married, rather abruptly, without any advance planning. At the motel in Pasa Robles, where they spent their brief honeymoon, unrecognized, Joe made sure the room was equipped with television. It was a portent of things to come. Joe couldn't stand the publicity she got, and it really bothered him when she posed publicly with her skirts up in the air for a scene in *The Seven-Year Itch*. She felt that Joe cared more about poker, baseball, his cronies, and TV than he did about her. Nine months after the wedding, they parted. She got a divorce, charging him with "coldness and indifference."

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It was only a few months later that Arthur Miller came back into her life.

Miller's married life had been going from bad to worse, possibly because of his memories of Marilyn and 1950. (There were many other causes, however, for the Millers' marital breakup.) In May 1955 Miller encountered Marilyn again at a party in New York. She was in a simple white dress. In her hand was a drink called a screwdriver (vodka and orange juice). She looked lovelier than ever.

By then she was going to the Actors Studio in New York, an ambitious project in which Miller had considerable interest. But Miller didn't take her home that night; actor Eli Wallach and his wife, who had taken her to the party, escorted her home. She seemed full of dreams and happy. Two weeks later Miller asked a friend for Marilyn's unlisted telephone number. All that summer and fall they met in out-of-the-way places—Long Island, Connecticut, little, obscure restaurants in New York. Usually Wallach was present, and it appeared that Marilyn was with him, not Miller. They managed to keep any hint of the affair out of the newspaper columns.

In June 1956, after she had finished work on *Bus Stop*, the story of their romance began to break into the papers. The press was in such hot pursuit that a girl reporter for a French magazine was killed in an auto accident trying to keep up with them.

They slipped off secretly to be married by a municipal judge in White Plains, a Westchester County suburb of New York. Two days later a rabbi married them in New York in a double-ring ceremony.

They had trying times ahead of them. Miller was called before a Congressional committee investigating Communism. This precipitated a court fight in which Marilyn loyally upheld her husband. But at the same time she made impossible demands on him: she expected him to think of nothing but her, to devote all of himself to her. His creative output dried up. He appeared to many who saw them to be little more than an aide to her. Their emotional life suffered. Two miscarriages made matters worse. He wrote a movie, *The Misfits*, for her, but then she went on to *Let's Make Love*—and promptly de-

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veloped an infatuation for Yves Montand, the French star. In 1960, four years, three months, and thirteen days after their wedding, Arthur Miller and Marilyn Monroe separated In January 1961 they got a Mexican divorce.

In the meantime Marilyn's movies had been improving, but not her temperament. *Bus Stop, How to Marry a Millionaire, Gentlemen Prefer Blondes,* and *Some Like It Hot* showed Marilyn as an actress whose technique was steadily improving But her personality had turned rather unpleasant. She said mean, nasty, petty, vicious things to her leading men. Don Murray, Tony Curtis, Laurence Olivier all had cause to detest her. "Vicious arrogance" and "vindictive selfishness" were some of the phrases applied to her by Curtis. She owned her own production company now, she was the queen at 20th Century-Fox, and she ruled with an iron fist. She wasn't pleasant to anyone—not the grips, not the other actors, not the production staff. She was paying everyone back for all her years of humility.

Hers was the savagery of the unsure, the frightened, the weak. As her outward toughness was demonstrated more forcefully, her inward uncertainties grew. She began work on *Something's Got to Give* and made history of a sort by making the most famous nude swimming scene since Hedy Lamarr's in the old European film, *Ecstacy*. But she showed up on only a handful of days for work, and the costs of the film began mounting astronomically. The studio called off the film, in the middle of the production, and suspended Marilyn.

She brooded, consulted her psychiatrist, saw her physician about a variety of psychosomatic disorders. She was afraid of age, of men, of inadequacy as a woman, of a possible decline in her career, of the hazards of a projected appearance on the Broadway stage, of the insanity that she feared ran in her family—above all, of loneliness.

On June 1, 1962 (her birthday) Andre de Dienes phoned her at the Beverly Hills Hotel to wish her well. She asked him to come up and see her. She was packing for a trip to New York. She said no one else had remembered her birthday. "She was sick of lonesomeness," he said.

On August 4, she talked on the telephone to Peter Lawford

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and asked him for the telephone number of his wife, Pat, in Hyannis Port, Massachusetts. She talked on the telephone with DiMaggio's son (by his first marriage), a Marine, about his broken engagement. She had dinner with her press agent, Pat Newcomb, and discussed plans for going to a movie the next day, a Sunday. Then she got another telephone call, from a caller who was not identified. That phone call appeared to upset Marilyn, or so her housekeeper, Mrs. Eunice Murray, thought.

Miss Newcomb left the house at 7 p.m. Marilyn closed and locked her door a short time later. After midnight, Mrs. Murray awoke and, walking through the house, saw the light shining under Marilyn's door. Alarmed, she tried to awaken her mistress. Then she called Marilyn's psychiatrist, who lived nearby.

Together, they broke in through a garden door of glass, and found Marilyn lying unclothed on the bed, a sheet pulled up about her head, the telephone in one hand. On her night stand were many bottles of pills. The insomnia which had troubled her since she was a child had been especially bad in recent months, and a day or two before a doctor had given her a prescription for nembutal tablets. That bottle was empty.

Marilyn Monroe was dead.

Almost everyone felt the pathos in the death of Marilyn Monroe. She was wrought by Hollywood, she ruled Hollywood, she was consumed by Hollywood. Most of all, she understood Hollywood. She realized that each year millions of people around the world enjoyed the dreams turned out by this tinsel place. Moviegoers have vicariously sinned, loved, fought, killed, reigned, sacrificed—all on an epic scale denied them in their ordinary, humdrum lives. The weary shopgirl could watch Clara Bow display "It" and have all the men throwing themselves at her feet, and somehow the shopgirl's life was a little brighter and more endurable. And the service station grease monkey could watch Rudolph Valentino sweep the beautiful leading lady up onto the silver saddle in front of him and gallop off to his hidden oasis with her for a spot of gallant, genteel rape. The fact that Clara Bow, off-screen,

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posed for revealing photographs, was famous for her real-life love affairs, and lived with insouciant flamboyance didn't diminish the image, of course. Nor did the thirty thousand hysterical women who rioted outside the Frank E. Campbell Funeral Church in Manhattan at the time of Valentino's funeral. Clara Bow was the shopgirl, living with the reckless defiance of convention that the shopgirl longed to display. And those thousands of women were really breaking their hearts over the grease monkey.

This was part of the greatness of Marilyn Monroe as a Hollywood institution. She knew the special quality of magic that Hollywood possessed for all the world, especially for the most deprived, hungry, emotion-starved part of that world. But almost everyone was affected by it. It is not without significance that one of Marilyn Monroe's fans was Dame Edith Sitwell, the aristocratic British poetess.

Hollywood won such an intimate place for itself in the hearts of moviegoers that everything its stars did, off-screen as well as on, became a matter of the greatest interest. Even today, when we look back to the golden days of Hollywood, most of us remember, not merely the great movies—although they remain an important part of our culture—but also the scandals. Remember the big fuss over *Confidential* magazine? The time that Lana Turner's daughter stabbed Johnny Stompanato to death in her mother's bedroom? Ingrid Bergman's startling love affair with Roberto Rossellini? Charlie Chaplin's paternity and Mann Act trials? The Errol Flynn statutory rape trial? The suicide of Lupe Velez? The mysterious death of Thelma Todd? The rumors when Jean Harlow's husband was found shot to death under very strange circumstances? The tragic narcotics addiction of Wallace Reid? The murder of William Desmond Taylor, which gave unwanted publicity to Mabel Normand and Mary Miles Minter? The Fatty Arbuckle trials after a bit actress died during an orgy?

Those are the highlights that come to mind when Hollywood's past is the subject of conversation. Even in the formal histories some scant mention of a few of them can be found. One of the best of these works, for example, says, "Late in

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1922 . . . within the space of a few short months, there came in quick succession the sordid Fatty Arbuckle rape case, the mysterious and still unsolved murder of director William Desmond Taylor (implicating both Mary Miles Minter and Mabel Normand, two top box-office stars of the time), and the shocking revelation of handsome Wallace Reid's addiction to drugs. Public indignation swelled to alarming proportions. Although their outrage was directed against individuals (Arbuckle and Miss Minter never appeared in films again; Mabel Normand's career was permanently damaged), the protests rapidly assumed the form of a threatened national censorship of all movies." This was obviously a critical time for motion pictures—the furor reached all the way to the White House. For two years or more it was the biggest news of all, even on Page One of the august *New York Times*, which was not as stuffy in those days as it is today. But not another word about these scandals appears in the history just cited!

Presumably a child under ten would not remember anything about the Arbuckle, Taylor, or Reid cases, and a child who was ten at that time would be fifty years old today. So it is reasonable to assume that scarcely anyone under fifty knows what the author of that history is talking about. What *was* the Arbuckle rape case? Why wasn't the William Desmond Taylor murder solved—and why were two stars ostracized because of it? How did Wallace Reid become a junkie?

These are reasonable questions that may properly be asked by anyone who reads a history of motion pictures. And the same may be said of other famous Hollywood scandals. A person who was ten on the day that Ingrid Bergman, married to a man in Hollywood, bore a baby to her lover in Rome would be twenty-three today. The under-twenty-three group must often wonder what all the fuss is about.

These are chapters missing from almost any history of Hollywood. The suggestion is that there is something not quite *nice* about recalling such scandals. They are better left forgotten, some folk say. But are they right?

I don't think so. A historian of the future, surveying the United States—indeed, the Western world—in the twentieth century, will be more concerned with Errol Flynn's light-

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hearted peccadilloes than with the anamorphic lens. To get a true picture of life in seventeenth-century England, we turn to Samuel Pepys, whose diary presents an uncensored account of a townsman's days. In the eighteenth century we find our most revealing view in the pages of James Boswell's bawdy journals. Elizabeth Jenkins, in her superb biography, *Elizabeth The Great,* probes deeply into the sexual appetites and activities of "the Virgin Queen," and her reward, very properly is high praise from the academic historian, Dr. A.L. Rowse: "This book gets nearer to penetrating the secret of the most remarkable woman in history than anyone has ever done. . . . Quite the most perceptive book about Elizabeth I that I have ever read." But if Good Queen Bess were a contemporary, Elizabeth Jenkins would have been discouraged from writing about the scandals that touched that monarch's life. Even the sex life of Queen Victoria—*after* Albert's death —has lately become part of the subject matter of a book; presumably that ostensibly unwavering keystone of nineteenth century priggery has been dead long enough to make her true life fit for print (if anyone can find out the facts at this late date).

This is so much nonsense, of course. We are all interested in scandal because it is the common denominator of mankind. If we do not ourselves become involved in scandal, it is not because we are incapable of it, but because some of us are more susceptible to some human frailties than others. One man will kick over the traces of respectability sexually, while another commits the sin of pride, and still a third gives in completely to the spirit of covetousness. We are all sinners, and it ill behooves any of us to look sanctimoniously on those who get caught in sin.

This book is about scandals, but it is not written with the intention of holding unfortunate persons up to public shame or embarrassment anew. It is, rather, sympathetic to the principals in these scandals. It is to be hoped that a calm view of these scandals will show the public the injustice and cruelty of leaping to conclusions and hounding the unfortunate. *Let him who is without sin cast the first stone,* as Holy Writ says. Ingrid Bergman has little reason to look back with self-

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reproach on the great scandal in her life, a time of crisi through which she passed like the noble woman she is, bu the millions who condemned her in her time of trouble——th self-righteous who presumed to set themselves up, like th Almighty Himself, to judge her—may well recall that time with shame.

When the next big scandal hits Hollywood, let us hope that there will be less talk of barring the stars who may be involved from the screen, and more talk of our common weaknesses of the flesh. If we are able to enjoy the pleasant things of life vicariously through the stars, let us not desert them when they are afflicted with the unpleasant things.

It may be said that Hollywood scandals antedated Hollywood itself.

One of the pioneers in motion pictures was an Englishman, Eadweard Muybridge, who first took motion pictures of a galloping horse in 1872. Muybridge was in California working on a geodetic survey for the United States government at the time that Governor Leland Stanford made an historic bet with two other horse racing enthusiasts, James R. Keene and Frederick MacCrellish. Stanford wagered twenty-five thousand dollars that a horse sometimes has all four hooves off the ground when galloping.

The difficulty was to settle the argument. Photography, then in a somewhat primitive state, seemed to be the most logical answer. Muybridge solved the problem by lining up twenty-four cameras to take pictures one after another. The photos proved Stanford was right.

Muybridge's multi-camera setup was a direct precursor of the motion picture camera. His personal life was a portent of what lay ahead for the movies. Muybridge's real name was Edward James Muggeridge. In 1874, two years after the galloping horse feat, Muybridge suspected a United States Army major of having cuckolded him. Muybridge went to the officer's house one night, stood outside in the darkness, and called for his wife's lover to come out. When the major stepped through the door, Muybridge cried out, "Here is a message from my wife," and shot the officer through the heart. A jury

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at Napa, California, acquitted Muybridge after he invoked the "unwritten law."

When motion pictures became a popular entertainment, they were free of scandal at first for a very good reason—the actors and actresses in such dramas as *The Great Train Robbery, Her Newsboy Friend,* and *A True Indian's Heart* were not identified. The anonymity of film actors in the early days resulted from the reluctance of actors to be identified with such a disreputable medium (movies were still frowned upon by genteel folk) and from the desire of the producers to keep wages low. Indeed, the low level of actors' pay in the early days was itself a major reason for the lack of scandal. Sin, like most of the other pleasures of life, requires an ample supply of money; virtue is most often to be found among those who cannot afford vice. And in those days movie actors could scarcely afford even virtue. Between 1896, when movies began to be shown publicly, and 1910, film actors were paid between five and fifteen dollars a day.

But nickelodeon fans, in a storm of letters to the producers, were demanding to know the names of the actors and actresses they had come to recognize in film after film. The film trust—an apparently impregnable monopoly headed by Thomas A. Edison and nine producers—ignored the letters, but Carl Laemmle, who was one of the independents struggling to break the power of the trust, saw in them a way to strike a blow for his own cause. He hired Florence Lawrence, who had been billed before simply as "The Biography Girl" and publicized her by name as his own star. The other independents followed suit, and soon the film trust had no alternative but to do the same.

The effect on actors' salaries was breathtaking. By 1914 the stars were making from $250 to $2,000 a week, and the pay of supporting actors had soared proportionately. The actors overnight had become the most important element in film-making. They could virtually name their own figures. Mary Pickford was one of the stars who did just that. After she had been working for Adolph Zukor for two years and had demonstrated her value as a drawing card at the box office,

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she went to Zukor and said, "Mr. Zukor, for years I've dreamed of making twenty thousand dollars a year before I was twenty. And I'll be twenty very soon now." She got the twenty thousand, then raised the ante to one hundred thousand a year, then to half a million. Finally Miss Pickford was making nearly a million dollars a year, including fifty per cent of the profits on her pictures, when she decided to join with her then husband, Douglas Fairbanks, Charles Chaplin, and director David Wark Griffith in forming United Artists Corporation, so that they could keep *all* the profits from their pictures.

And incomes like these were being made when there was no income tax (and even in the 1920s the income tax was very low).

Mary Pickford didn't let her newly found riches go to her head, nor did many other actors and actresses and producers and directors. But there were many who found all that money so overwhelming that they completely lost all sense of perspective. As *The New York Journal*'s Hollywood correspondent put it at the time, "When people spring from poverty to affluence within a few weeks, their mental equipment is not always equal to the strain. They have money, an unaccustomed toy, and they spend it in bizarre ways. They may indulge in 'wild parties' or they may indulge in other forms of relaxation and excitement. Many of them spend all they make. Since Prohibition came in many of them who had no liquor stocks turned to other stimulants. The dealers in illicit drugs found a growing market." Only a "relatively small group" in Hollywood went in for this sort of thing, the correspondent added.

Almost every visitor to Hollywood in those early days made the same observation. The British novelist, Elinor Glyn, who helped usher in the new ways of the Roaring Twenties, told *The New York Times*, "The trouble with the movie industry is that so many young people in it get rich suddenly. They are not taught control, and it is hard for them to resist temptation. A young girl acts with a handsome young star all day long in emotional scenes, and when she gets through she is apt to think that husband is an awful bore."

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Perhaps in New York, with its countless leisure time resources and its sophistication, the newly rich actors might have managed to handle themselves without too much nastiness. But in 1908 the trek to Hollywood had begun. The movie-makers went West for two reasons: they could depend on year-round sunlight for their cameras, and they were far from the film trust and close to the Mexican border. When the film trust—which was not broken by court order until 1917—cracked down it played rough. The independents were raided by goons with brass knuckles and iron pipes. Cameras were seized and film was snatched away. Even in Hollywood Cecil B. DeMille used to wear a pistol and carry the day's takes home with him every night for safe-keeping, and one night he was shot at. If the film trust chose to fight in the courts by getting an injunction, an independent producer could slip across the border into Mexico and continue his work.

Sometimes the movie people slipped across the border for other reasons. Mack Sennett once rushed his entire troupe into Mexico after he got a tip that a seventeen-year-old girl who had bestowed her favors on virtually every able-bodied man in the film colony had gone to the district attorney with a statutory rape complaint. Weeks later, the troupe was able to return to Hollywood; the girl had named a Santa Barbara grocer, not an actor (or actors).

When the movie people moved in, Vine Street was a deeply rutted dirt road with a row of pepper trees down the middle. Barns were rented as studios. Coyotes howled in Cahuenga Canyon. Informality was the style; movie queens could be seen, coats flung over their nightgowns, to get bottles of milk and newspapers at the drug stores (or store—in the beginning there was just one).

In 1910 Hollywood had been annexed by Los Angeles, but it was still eight miles out in the country, and people used to go to the Hollywood Hotel as a rural retreat. There were dances there on Thursday nights, with all the top stars in attendance, and many of the stars lived in the hotel. A step down on the social ladder was the Alexandria Hotel; five o'clock was casting time at the bar there. Actors who needed

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work could also put up their photos on the wall of a Hollywood grocery store.

Life was flamboyant. Nazimova shocked all Los Angeles by strolling along Sunset Boulevard in bright yellow pajamas in broad daylight, in an era when pajamas were strictly for bedroom wear. Bebe Daniels got ten days in jail for going seventy-five miles an hour in her powerful car down a dirt road in Santa Ana, but Abe Lyman brought his band to serenade her and a restaurant sent in special meals to her and advertised, "We Are Feeding Bebe Daniels." Some of the cowboy extras from the horse operas liked to have fun from time to time firing their pistols in the streets, a sport that unnerved many Angelenos. (One Japanese gardener got so annoyed that he got a pistol himself and shot director Francis Boggs to death at the Selig studio near Eighth and Hill Streets.)

The people who had lived in Los Angeles, and especially in Hollywood, before the invasion of the movie folk, didn't like it at all. They put up signs: "No Dogs or Actors"—which irritated dog fanciers no end. The actors were unwelcome in local organizations; even William DeMille, whose background and breeding should have made him acceptable anywhere, was barred from the Los Angeles Country Club.

That attitude lasted for many years. The Angelenos didn't care whether Harold Lloyd's gardens and fountains, tumbling down a Hollywood hillside, were spectacular. They didn't care that Gloria Swanson bathed in a solid gold tub sunk into the floor of a black marble bathroom. They didn't care that the ceiling of Marion Davies' living room was fourteen carat gold. They didn't care that Mary Pickford's mansion, "Pickfair," was one of the most palatial establishments in the whole country. They didn't care that Valentino had nothing but black walls in his famous mountain-top home, "Falcon's Lair."

They did know that Tom Mix had put up his initials in a huge electrical sign over his Beverly Hills mansion. They didn't like it.

The attitude of the local people was a clue to the way the whole nation would react when there was trouble. Unrecognized by Hollywood, a feeling of hostility toward the stars was

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growing throughout the country. As Benjamin B. Hampton, writing in 1931, just a decade later, said, "For several years the stories of huge wages were regarded as showman exaggerations, merely the reckless boasting of inspired press agents. People thought it preposterous that a girl, unknown a year or two earlier, should be receiving two thousand dollars a week, or that a plumber's assistant should have become a comedian worth a quarter of a million a year. But gradually theater patrons came to realize that these stories were true, and realization was accompanied by mixed emotions that in many instances turned to bitterness and hostility. Admiration and adoration of movie celebrities had developed without any very sound basis, and now many people who had formed the habit of idolizing their favorites as superior beings were shocked to discover that their divinities were money-grubbers of the most ordinary variety. Merchants and professional men, struggling to earn five or ten thousand dollars a year, began to curse the 'pretty boys' of the screen who received as much in a month or a week, and their wives grew caustic in commenting on the 'dough-faced girls who hadn't brains enough to act, but were lucky enough to get a fortune for being clothes-horses.' "

The newspaper stories out of Hollywood had been hinting, more and more, at some of the less innocuous aspects of life in the new film capital. The phrase "casting couch" came into common use across the country. Rumors of orgies, brothels, and studio call girls swept across the country. Articles about narcotics, blackmail, and divorce were appearing in the press every day.

Of course, none of this was unique to Hollywood. It was the beginning of the Roaring Twenties, the immediate postwar era, the time of Prohibition. Moral standards were changing everywhere, not just in Hollywood. There was a new sexual freedom. The old order was being overturned in every hamlet of America.

But the changes were not immediately apparent in Albany, New York, Peoria, Illinois, Arlington, Minnesota, or Tucson, Arizona.

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Hollywood, on the other hand, was living in a glass house. Many Americans didn't like what they saw going on there. The stage was set for trouble—and the cameras were ready to start rolling.

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II — Roscoe (Fatty) Arbuckle: *A Party in 'Frisco*

As the summer of 1921 drew to an end, Roscoe Arbuckle was able to reflect that he was sitting on top of the world. He had just signed a contract that would pay him three million dollars over a three-year period, or almost three thousand dollars a day.

Arbuckle—called "Fatty" by millions of moviegoers but never anything but "Roscoe" by his friends—was one of the greatest comedy stars of his time. He was perhaps the most popular star of all as far as the children of the world were concerned, and only those who felt that *anything* projected on the silver screen had to be evil excluded themselves from his following.

It is surely one of the classic ironies in the history of puritanism in the United States that the first big scandal involving that instrument of the Devil, motion pictures, should involve an actor whose films had been notably free of anything objectionable.

As the Labor Day weekend approached, Arbuckle finished the last of three consecutive feature pictures—without a day off in between them—for Famous Players-Lasky, the studio that later became Paramount Pictures. Arbuckle felt the need of some boisterous relaxation. But Los Angeles was too familiar and too much of a small town in those days, a dull little place; all the fun was in cosmopolitan, tolerant San Francisco.

So Arbuckle took off from Hollywood with a couple of friends in his twenty-five thousand dollar Rolls Royce. It was a journey to oblivion, a trip that would bring death to a young woman, ruin to his career, and unexpected perils to the entire industry which had enriched him.

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Roscoe Arbuckle was born in Smith Corners, Kansas, on March 24, 1887. He was just thirty-four when the death of Virginia Rappe after a party in his San Francisco hotel room brought his career to an end.

In that short span, however, he played a not inconsiderable part in nurturing motion pictures through their uncertain infancy. He represented an era, but the cliché that "his death marked the end of an era" could not be said of him. He died professionally a decade before he passed away in the flesh, but that decade in Hollywood proved that his downfall had brought about no significant change in the new order which was fast becoming the old order.

Roscoe was still an infant when his parents moved from the Middle West to California, which made him one of the few early film stars who had grown up on the West Coast. He was only eight years old when he first appeared on the stage before an audience. That was in San Jose, California, when he appeared with the stock company of Frank Bacon. Arbuckle spent his youth in southern California.

There is nothing to indicate that Arbuckle ever spent much time in school. Whatever education he had he picked up backstage from the older actors, actresses, and stagehands. He spent his entire boyhood backstage; all he cared about was show business, and he did anything and everything he could to remain in that exciting field. He was fat from the time he learned to walk, and this limited his opportunity. Nevertheless, he managed to find work somehow. As a boy he worked as ticket-taker, at seventeen he was singing "illustrated songs" in a San Jose nickelodeon, and finally Leon Errol—later a well known comedian in the movies but then manager of the Orpheum Theater in Portland, Oregon—let him go onstage with his own vaudeville act, a blackface monologuist in the heyday of blackface acts.

He must have won a certain amount of popularity, for in 1905 Murads cigarettes ran an advertisement carrying his endorsement—the first cigarette testimonial in what was to become a long and absurd chapter in the history of advertising.

In 1913 Mack Sennett gave the young entertainer a tryout for his two-reel comedies. Arbuckle must have been doing

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badly in vaudeville at the time, for he accepted Sennett's offer of a job as one of the Keystone Cops at the magnificent salary of three dollars a day!

Within a short time, however, Arbuckle was to appear on a list of the most highly paid stars of show business, as published in *Variety*. Arbuckle was making $1,250 a week then, which put him in a tie for eighth place with Elbert Hubbard, the homespun "philosopher," behind Gertrude Hoffman, Eva Tanguay, hypnotist J Robert Pauline, swimmer and film star Annette Kellerman, female impersonator Julian Eltinge, Alice Lloyd, and the Gus Edwards Song Revue, but well ahead of such famous entertainers as Lionel Barrymore and Pat Rooney.

But Arbuckle's four-figure weekly income did not begin until he had graduated from the Keystone Cops comedies. He emerged as a star in his own two-reelers for Sennett, appearing with other Keystone stars including Charlie Chaplin and Mabel Normand (both of whom would also be involved in scandals eventually)

Sennett used to advertise his comedies as "The Great Big Splashes of Fun and Beauty," and it was honest advertising: slapstick humor and pretty girls made an unbeatable combination. Sennett discovered great talents and gave them considerable liberty in developing their own brand of humor, and much of his best film resulted from the spontaneous horseplay and high spirits of his troupe.

In 1917 Arbuckle left Sennett to make his own comedies for Famous Players-Lasky, but a few months later Sennett himself was in the FPL setup, having moved his entire operation into that rapidly expanding organization. Joseph M. Schenck was then a producer at the studio, and he and Arbuckle became friends. In the light of the widespread belief that there are no loyalties in Hollywood, it is worth noting that they remained friends, even after Arbuckle's personal disaster cost Schenck millions of dollars. Indeed, most of Hollywood, like Schenck, remained steadfast in Arbuckle's defense until the end—perhaps too steadfast.

The FPL Colony Studios on East Forty-Eighth Street in New York housed Arbuckle's comedy company in the beginning.

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But he was there less than a year. Then FPL decided to move almost all its operations out to Hollywood, including Arbuckle's group. Most of the other movie makers were already on the West Coast. Arbuckle was now one of the most highly paid men in the movies or in any other industry; nobody in pictures was a bigger attraction except Charlie Chaplin.

As Gene Fowler once rhapsodized in an adjective-strewn panegyric, all other pie-throwing comedians "were mere *petit fours* twiddlers when compared with that greatest custard slinger of all time, the mightiest triple-threat man that ever stepped on the waffle-iron, the All-American of All-Americans, the supreme grand lama of the meringue, the Hercules of the winged dessert, the Ajax of the hurtling fritter, the paragon of patty-casters, the unconquerable and valiant flinger of open and closed mince models, the monarch of the zooming rissoles . . . Roscoe (Fatty) Arbuckle!"

Everybody loved Fatty Arbuckle—even other actors—and Arbuckle loved the world. He appeared to be as jolly as fat men are supposed to be. A down-at-the-heels variety act could always depend on the open-handed star for a grubstake and a word of encouragement, and he gave advice as freely as he gave money. His advice was valuable, too, for he knew his craft thoroughly. Unlettered he might be, but stupid he was not; he had an active, intelligent mind and his on-screen madness had method to it. He knew what he was doing every second that he was on the screen.

Off the screen the same could not be said of him. He was too often a puppet dancing to strings pulled by his own passions and emotions, capable of doing things contrary to prudence and common sense. In the light of what later transpired, it is worth pausing to consider Buster Keaton's appraisal of his old and dear friend in his autobiography, *My Wonderful World of Slapstick*. Arbuckle, he recalled, "had no meanness, malice, or jealousy in him."

This was Roscoe (Fatty) Arbuckle at the top of the heap, soon to be at the bottom; the most beloved actor of millions of Americans, soon to be despised.

A kindly Providence gave Arbuckle warning. Three years before disaster overcame him, an orgy in Boston—of all

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places!—almost erupted into a public scandal. It should have been a hint to him that this sort of thing was highly dangerous for a public figure, one of the biggest stars in Hollywood, but it didn't.

The orgy that Boston newspapermen later came to call the "hundred thousand dollar girl and champagne party" began soberly enough. Arbuckle was making a brief personal appearance in Boston, and a great banquet was held in his honor. The dinner, attended by a score of national leaders in the industry, was held in the Copley Plaza, a conservative Back Bay hotel. Before midnight the party broke up, but most of the men present were bundled into touring cars and driven off to Brownie Kennedy's roadhouse at Mishawum Manor, outside Boston at Woburn. They had called ahead, and by the time they got there the roadhouse was all lit up and rarin' to go, and so were the girls inside it.

The booze was good and the girls were not, and the orgy was a rousing success, as such things go.

Unfortunately, however, there had to come a morning after. In this case, came the dawn and two of the girls began to mutter that they'd been had. They had been engaged to perform as "professional musicians," they later told the authorities—ignoring the ribald grins that greeted their statement—and they had been promised fifty dollars for their endeavors. But the woman who operated the roadhouse refused to pay them the next day, for some reason, perhaps because they had tried to earn their pay by playing music instead of games. The girls threatened to go to the police, but the resort keeper said she wasn't afraid of *that,* because the authorities had been paid off to overlook her establishment.

The two girls were still angry. So they complained to the district attorney, and he looked into the whole affair.

What happened after that became a matter of dispute and inquiry by several official bodies. One thing is known: less than a month after their frolic at Brownie Kennedy's, the host of the party got word that some of the girls were talking about their erstwhile playmates. He hastily summoned the industry bosses who had been there to another meeting, this time a secret gathering, not for fun, at New London, Connecticut—not

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far from Boston (or from Long Island Sound, if any of the men cared to throw themselves in), but safely outside the legal jurisdiction of Massachusetts. The grim-faced men decided to put up a war chest of one hundred thousand dollars, to be used as their man on the spot deemed advisable.

Where did the money go? That has never been established definitely.

The wild party at Brownie Kennedy's took place in the early morning hours of March 7, 1917. On July 21, 1921, Attorney General Allen charged that there was a connection between the DA's office and the suppression of the scandal. The attorney general alleged that there were threats to prosecute the motion picture producers, actors, and theater owners who had attended the orgy; that a lawyer then extorted one hundred thousand dollars from the men; and that no action was taken against them.

Arbuckle was named by the attorney general as one of those who had enjoyed the hospitality of Brownie Kennedy's cosy cottage, but the newspapers were kind to him then. His part in the proceedings was soft-pedaled and it didn't hurt his career at all.

Another man might have been chastened by such a narrow brush with scandal; not Arbuckle. His life went on, unshadowed by evil omens, for six more months, until the scandal that was to destroy him burst upon him.

Calamity seemed far away from Arbuckle and his crowd—most of them in their twenties. They were young and full of spirit, they had more money than they had ever expected to see, and the world idolized them. It was a heady experience, somewhat akin to the sudden freedom that many a youth discovers for the first time when he goes away to college.

But this was complete freedom, not the limited freedom of a campus. These young people, most of them of little education, had known poverty and deprivation as children, and now they were determined to catch up belatedly on the pleasant things of life. They loved carefree horseplay and went in for so many practical jokes that before long they were barred from half the lots in Hollywood. They drank far too much, as

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thousands of other American young people were doing in those frenetic days of the Noble Experiment. They explored sex with the enthusiasm and the vigor of alley cats.

There were always plenty of willing girls, hopeful that a horizontal encounter with an actor might lead to a vertical career before the cameras; they were usually disappointed, often in more ways than one. Girls flocked from all over the country to Hollywood. What they found there depended to a large extent on Luck, and like most ladies, Luck rarely looked with a kind eye on other women.

Among the girls who turned up in Hollywood was Virginia Rappe. She was twenty when she arrived there, five years before her death. She had been a model of sorts. She was best known for the fact that her picture appeared on the sheet music for the song, "Let Me Call You Sweetheart." In Hollywood she got a few bit parts in some two-reel comedies.

The photographs of her that survive show a brunette who is not noticeably pretty; she has a big look about her, although she was only five feet seven inches tall and weighed just one hundred and thirty-five pounds. Keaton is an Arbuckle partisan, but his comment about her is nevertheless worth repeating: "She was about as virtuous as most of the other untalented young women who had been knocking around Hollywood for years, picking up small parts any way they could."

At the beginning of the Labor Day weekend in 1921, Virginia Rappe went to San Francisco. Why she went there was never made clear. She may have known that Arbuckle was going to be there.

On Sunday, the day before Labor Day, Arbuckle and two friends—actor Lowell Sherman and director Fred Fischbach—motored up to the northern California city. They checked into a three-room suite on the twelfth floor of the St. Francis Hotel. A case of whiskey and another of gin arrived, ice was sent up, people began arriving, and soon a party was well under way, to the occasional but loud music of a phonograph that was wound up by anyone who happened to be near enough—and sober enough—to crank it.

People came and went all day, so it's impossible to pin

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down precisely who was there. In addition to Arbuckle, Fischbach, and Lowell, it's known that three showgirls were there, and there were certainly others.

In due course Virginia Rappe arrived, in response to a telephoned summons from Arbuckle, and with her she thoughtfully brought her agent and a friend.

What happened after that is still unclear, despite public testimony and presentation of evidence at the inquest, the preliminary hearing, and the three trials of Roscoe Arbuckle.

There were charges and counter-charges of bribery, perjury, suppression of evidence, intimidation, coaching of witnesses.

At that time there were persons in the state government who had a few scores to settle with the movie industry, and apparently hoped to settle them in the course of Arbuckle's prosecution.

There were men prominent in the movie industry who would stop at almost nothing to protect their industry and their properties.

Both sides saw issues in the case greater than the fate of Virginia Rappe or even of Fatty Arbuckle. That explains the record of the hearings, with key witnesses changing their stories or disappearing altogether.

The result is that no one, in all probability, will ever know the truth about what happened in the St. Francis Hotel that day.

According to all accounts, Virginia Rappe appeared to be in the best of health when she arrived at the party. There was little need to search for the room number—the sounds of revelry, scratching records, deep bellows of masculine laughter, feminine giggles, the tinkle of bottles against glasses could be heard far down the hall.

At some point in the proceedings, Virginia Rappe became ill. She was taken to another room in the hotel and treated there by the house physician until Wednesday. Then she was removed to a private nursing home, where she died the next day. The attending physicians, puzzled, performed an autopsy but signed the death certificate.

That would normally have closed the case, as far as the au-

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thorities were concerned. It would appear to be a natural death not requiring investigation. Virginia Rappe might have gone to her death an obscure bit player, known only to other film actors—and Fatty Arbuckle might have gone on indefinitely amusing audiences the world over by his innocent antics—had not a woman on the hospital staff become curious.

She telephoned the coroner's office and asked Deputy Coroner Michael Brown when the autopsy was to be performed. "What autopsy are you talking about?" Dr. Brown asked. He had received no report of an unusual death. Before the woman could answer, he heard another voice in the background, whispering to her; she gasped and hung up.

His curiosity now fully aroused, Dr. Brown telephoned the hospital and recognized the voice that answered as that of his caller. When he began to question her, however, she denied her identity and said, "I'm sorry—I have no information to give you."

That did it. Dr. Brown went to the hospital and began an investigation. He learned the name of the woman who had died there. He examined her body in the morgue. He saw that the bladder was ruptured. It didn't look like a natural death to him.

He called the police.

The police reporters for the San Francisco newspapers got wind of the story. Almost instantly it flashed across the news service wires to New York, where it became the banner line on Page One:

"Fatty Arbuckle Sought in Orgy Death!"

Even before the inquest was held, there was an omen of what lay ahead. Harry Kelly, secretary of the grand jury, issued a statement in which he said, "So many women's clubs and private individuals interested in the moral welfare of the city have demanded an investigation that I will present their demands to the jury. It is our duty to investigate such things, and we will certainly do so."

The day before the inquest, Hearst's *New York American* ran a screamer headline:

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"Arbuckle Held in Jail on Charge of Murder."

The front page headline the next day, September 13, was even better for circulation:

"Inquest Bares Full Story of Arbuckle Orgy."

Arbuckle gave the press a statement embodying his version of the affair. It told of his arrival in San Francisco the day after Miss Rappe and her two friends had arrived there. Then it went on:

"At my invitation they came to my rooms to have a few drinks. I was clad in pajamas, bathrobe, and bedroom slippers, and was having my breakfast when the trio entered. We sat in the room, had a few drinks, and talked over matters that concerned us.

"Shortly after Miss Rappe had taken a few drinks she became hysterical, complained that she could not breathe, and then started to tear off her clothes. I requested two girls present at the time to take care of Miss Rappe. She was disrobed and placed in a bath tub to be revived. The immersion did not benefit her, and I then telephoned to the hotel manager, telling him what was wrong, and requested that Miss Rappe be given a room. She was taken out of my room and put to bed.

"When no change came in Miss Rappe's condition, I summoned a physician. I departed from the St. Francis Tuesday (September 6), having engaged passage on the steamer Harvard the Saturday before to go to Los Angeles. The report that I was ordered by the management to leave the St. Francis is not true.

"I was at no time alone with Miss Rappe. During the time in my rooms there were at least half a dozen people there all the time and I can produce witnesses to bear out that statement. I am only too glad to return to San Francisco to assist the authorities in straightening out this horrible mess."

It was a pallid statement, apparently calculated to diminish interest in the case. But if that was the hope, it was sadly misplaced. For Mrs. Delmont—Virginia Rappe's friend—stepped forward with her story in the form of an affidavit to the police, and it was a good deal spicier.

She said that Virginia had two or three screwdrivers (drinks made of orange juice and gin in those days; vodka

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usually substitutes for the gin today) after they arrived at the party. Then Arbuckle suddenly shoved Virginia into an adjoining bedroom, locking the door. As he did it, Mrs. Delmont recalled, he told the girl, "I've waited for you five years, and now I've got you"—as corny as the titles that used to appear on the silent film melodramas.

While this was going on, Mrs. Delmont did nothing. As she explained, "I did not know Miss Rappe too well, so I did not want to interfere." Presumably she thought this sort of thing might be an every-day occurrence with the Arbuckle-Rappe crowd.

Then Mrs. Delmont began to hear Miss Rappe screaming. The screams did not sound commonplace; they sounded as though Miss Rappe were desperately in earnest. The screams continued from room 1219 although Mrs. Delmont, now thoroughly alarmed, kicked and pounded at the door. After a half hour, she said, she grabbed the telephone and called to the hotel desk for help. Assistant manager H. J. Boyle was sent up to the room.

Just as Boyle arrived, Arbuckle opened the door to 1219 and came out in his pajamas, wearing Virginia Rappe's hat tilted jauntily atop his head and his familiar "foolish screen smile," as Mrs. Delmont later described it, on his face.

"Go in and get her dressed and take her back to the Palace," Arbuckle told Mrs. Delmont, according to her account. "She makes too much noise."

The women in the party slipped into room 1219 and found the Rappe girl virtually nude. Her clothes—a green jersey jacket, a matching skirt, a white silk teddy trimmed with green (a *teddy* was a woman's one-piece undergarment of the time, consisting of a top combined with loose-fitting drawers), a white silk waist, and a pair of black lace garters—had been torn off her and lay strewn about the floor. Virginia was sobbing with the pain that tore at her insides.

"I'm dying," she moaned to Mrs. Delmont. "I'm dying, I'm dying. Arbuckle did it. He hurt me."

Arbuckle snorted. He told the others that the girl wasn't hurt—she was just "putting it on." He told her to shut up or he'd throw her out of the window.

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What had been done to Virginia Rappe in room 1219 while the door was locked?

That was what the public was waiting to be told. The public remained frustrated for several days, until the preliminary hearing. Then Al Seminacher told the court what Arbuckle himself had said about the activities in the locked room.

Seminacher said that on the day after the party—three days before Miss Rappe died—Arbuckle, Sherman, Fischbach, Arbuckle's chauffeur, Harry McCullough, and Seminacher were together in Arbuckle's suite at the St. Francis when Arbuckle began to give them a detailed account of his sex adventure with her.

He told them, or so Seminacher said, that he had shoved a big piece of ice into her genitals.

"Everyone laughed," Seminacher recalled.

Seminacher had been called to the stand at the police court hearing as a defense witness. His testimony was a real blow to the defense. A New York reporter covering the trial wrote:

"Details of the assault were whispered to the court reporter, written on a bit of paper, and passed around among the attorneys."

This unusual procedure took place after Seminacher, ordered to give the details that Arbuckle had told his friends, objected to testifying to them in public.

The case was getting worse for Arbuckle. The coroner's jury had already decided that he was criminally responsible for the girl's death. Demanding that Arbuckle be prosecuted for manslaughter, the coroner's jury called on the authorities to "take steps to prevent a further occurrence of such events, so that San Francisco will not be made the rendezvous of the debauchee and the gangster."

The language was getting rougher. It reflected public opinion, which was rising swiftly against Arbuckle.

Public sentiment was whipped up still more by Henry Lehrman, a director and producer for Selznick, who had, it seemed, been Miss Rappe's fiancé at the time of her unfortunate demise. Lehrman, Vienna-born, directed Chaplin in his first pictures. Known to his friends as "Pathé" because he had bluffed his way into movies by pretending to represent

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the Pathé Company of France, Lehrman had been a friend of Arbuckle for a decade.

After Miss Rappe's death, Lehrman publicly and frequently proclaimed his unshaken belief in his intended's virtue and in Arbuckle's perfidy. Lehrman had been in New York when Miss Rappe died, and he said he had been "advised"—he didn't say by whom—to remain there. So he summoned the press to tell them that he had sent a thousand dollars' worth of tiger lilies to cover her coffin. (Some eight thousand persons filed past her bier in a Los Angeles undertaking establishment.)

Unlike most movie folk—especially those who thought that Arbuckle might, indeed, be guilty—Lehrman was eager to tell the world what he thought, in order to clear the fair name of his fiancée.

"My prayer is that justice be done," Lehrman said. "I don't want to go to the Coast now. I could not face Arbuckle. I would kill him. If he wants to live, he had better be punished."

Lehrman fingered a pair of cufflinks that Miss Rappe had given him. They were inscribed:

"To Henry, my first and last sacred love. Virginia."

"Virginia," Lehrman said, "had the most remarkable determination. She would rise from the dead to defend her person from indignity."

"I had a talk over the long distance telephone with Mrs. Sidi Spreckels. She said that before she knew she was going to die Virginia kept saying, 'Don't tell Henry! Don't tell Henry!' That means one thing: she had lost the battle she made to defend herself. She didn't want me to know her honor had been violated."

A more skeptical soul might have read another meaning into Miss Rappe's words, but nobody pointed that out to Lehrman.

Rape was an old story with Arbuckle, to hear Lehrman tell it. "He boasted to me that he had torn the clothing from an unwilling girl and outraged her," the director told a world that was just dying to be shocked. He said that Arbuckle had caused a great deal of difficulty because of his often unwel-

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come attentions to actresses. "I finally had to tell him that if he didn't keep out of the women's dressing rooms I would see that he was through," Lehrman added.

Miss Rappe had distrusted and disliked Arbuckle, Lehrman insisted in the face of the fact that she had gone to Arbuckle's suite in the hotel.

"Virginia always had a violent physical aversion to Arbuckle," he said. "When we three worked together I wanted everything to be like a happy family. One time when he attended a party her aversion sort of dampened things. I took her aside and said, 'Cheer up. Treat him pleasantly. He's a good fellow.' She replied, 'He's coarse and vulgar. He nauseates me. He is cheap and thinks he's funny.' "

With a showman's sure instinct for the dramatic, Lehrman painted his own picture of the fatal scene for the press:

"I can see now, in my mind's eye, how she must have fought him like a tiger, even if she had a couple of drinks. I remember once, when there was a terrible assault case in the newspapers, she said to me quietly, 'Henry, if anyone tried to do a thing like that to me, he'd have to kill me.' "

Lehrman's shoulders sagged eloquently.

"Well," he said, "she's dead."

It was great stuff, and the public ate it up. About the time of Arbuckle's first trial, however, the public learned that the grief-stricken fiancée had taken a "modiste's model" named Jocelyn Leigh to a smart Manhattan shop and bought her an expensive fur coat just a few days after Miss Rappe's death.

Throughout the country women's clubs, churches, reform groups, civic societies, and miscellaneous busybodies were loudly expressing their opinions. From Fresno to Falmouth, theater managers were being urged, implored, persuaded, or just plain ordered to stop showing Arbuckle films. (Films in which Miss Rappe appeared had been withdrawn as soon as she died.) In Geneva, a Danish delegate to an international conference even managed to drag poor Arbuckle's name into a discussion of white slavery.

"The smouldering gossip of corruption in the films broke into flame," Terry Ramsaye wrote five years later in his mag-

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nificent survey of the cinema, *A Million and One Nights.* "New York film offices were stricken with terror. There were endless conferences. Lawyers scurried about. Press agents tore at their hair and typewriters. Statements flew and the wires to San Francisco were overloaded. The set of facts was discouraging. It was difficult for even the most ingenious scenario makers to fit the admitted circumstances into an acceptable tale. . . ."

The voices of sanity, justice, and fair play were few, and they could scarcely be heard. But there were some. At the end of a long article reporting theaters and cities all over the country that had barred Arbuckle films, a New York newspaper carried a little item announcing that Fred G. Nixon-Nirdlinger, who controlled a string of Philadelphia theaters, intended to go on showing Arbuckle movies until and unless the fat man was convicted.

"There is no use kicking a man when he is down," said the brave theater owner. "Arbuckle has not been brought to trial yet, and until he is, cannot be called guilty, according to law. We can use our own judgment as to what happened, but until a legal decision is rendered, we should be fair to all concerned."

But nobody wanted to be fair. The storm had broken upon Hollywood and fate had chosen to sweep away the most vulnerable star of all—a fat man, and thus an easy object of revulsion. As old Earl Rogers, too tired and sick to handle Arbuckle's defense, told Joe Schenck, "Arbuckle's weight will damn him. He will become a monster." A thin man might have done what Arbuckle did. But in fact it wasn't a thin man; it was Fatty.

Responding to the fury of the mob, the state had obtained an indictment, not for manslaughter, as the coroner's jury had recommended, but for murder. The stated grounds for preferring this capital charge were that Arbuckle had caused Miss Rappe's death in the course of committing a felony (*i.e.*, rape or attempted rape). However, no evidence was introduced at the trials to prove that Arbuckle committed rape or even attempted rape upon the person of Virginia Rappe.

Released on bail, Arbuckle returned to Hollywood and re-

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ceived a mixed greeting. Inside the old Santa Fe Railroad station more than a thousand friends in the industry, many of them stars, directors, and producers, had turned out to welcome him.

But outside another crowd was waiting—a crowd that represented most of the movie-going world. And the people in that crowd, when they saw Arbuckle, hissed and spat and called him "Murderer!" and "Big, fat slob!" and "Beast!" and "Degenerate!"

In that dreadful moment the heart of Roscoe Arbuckle died.

He would live for another decade or so, but he never again could be Fatty Arbuckle, the funny man. He had been shaken to the core. For the first time he really comprehended the enormity of the misfortune that had befallen Virginia Rappe and Roscoe Arbuckle. He never forgot the horror and the pain of seeing hatred upon the faces of the people—the ordinary people who had adored him so recently. Even the tons of hate letters that he found awaiting him in Hollywood didn't affect him as much.

There were three trials in all. Both sides had elected to fight the case in the public prints, so an impartial trial was inconceivable. But the first trial ended in a hung jury, and so did the second. This reflected the courtroom genius of Frank Dominguez, the defense counsel—and the success of some film industry leaders in inducing key witnesses to vanish when they were needed.

Some of the testimony lived up to advance notices. There was Josephine Keza, a maid in the hotel, for example. She told of hearing "music, dancing, and doors slamming" from the room where Arbuckle's rowdy party was under way. Then, from the room next to it, she began to hear unbearable, heartbreaking screams.

"When I heard the screams, I ran and listened," she said.

Behind the door she heard a woman crying in pain, "No, no —oh, my God! *NO!*"—followed by Arbuckle's voice saying, "Shut up!"—and then more screams.

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It apparently did not occur to the maid to notify the management about the odd goings-on on the twelfth floor.

Another witness gave testimony which indicated that Arbuckle had used ice in his sexual revels at least once before—a matter which surely must have intrigued any psychoanalysts who were following the case.

In defense of their friend, Arbuckle's adherents had been whispering that he had enjoyed Miss Rappe's favors on several previous occasions, so there would have been no reason for him to force himself upon her. But those rumors took a beating when Jesse K. Norgard took the witness stand for the prosecution. Norgard, janitor at a movie studio (one wonders how long he retained the job after testifying), swore that Arbuckle once offered him "a roll of bills" for a key to Miss Rappe's dressing room on the lot. The virtuous Norgard of course rejected the offer.

It was obvious that this testimony, if true, ruled out the possibility that Arbuckle had been Miss Rappe's lover. If he had been, he would scarcely have needed to bribe the janitor for a key to her room.

The defense did get in some telling blows. Dominguez managed to get the state's medical witnesses completely confused. Before they left the stand, they had been forced to admit that the peritonitis which killed Miss Rappe might not have been caused by anything that happened at the party. The peritonitis had resulted when her bladder was ruptured. It was the defense contention that the shock of cold water, when the women at the party tried to revive Miss Rappe by immersing her in an icy tub, had ruptured the bladder.

The state, on the other hand, argued that Arbuckle's assault had caused the rupture. The mere weight of his body upon her in intercourse, when her bladder was distended from drinking, would have been enough to tear the bladder open, according to the prosecution.

The trials were lively affairs. One key defense witness was arrested for perjury a few hours after she testified that Miss Rappe had stayed at her resort to enjoy the company of men; the state was able to prove that Miss Rappe had not been

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away from home overnight at the time. The defense tried to get in its licks by calling as a witness an alleged fingerprint expert who was prepared to testify that Arbuckle's fingerprints, overlapping Miss Rappe's on the jamb of the door leading to his bedroom, as though she had clung to it until he pulled her hands away, had been forged. The judge decided that the witness was not qualified to testify as an expert.

The state was unable to use its best witness, Mrs. Delmont. The defense had investigated her background and discovered that she had committed bigamy. She later pleaded guilty to that charge and was released on probation, but her usefulness as a witness was over.

The press coverage was uninhibited throughout the trials. "Arbuckle Dragged Rappe Girl to Room, Woman Testifies," was one Page One headline in the usually restrained *New York Times*.

Some of the newspapers were ready to print anything that was lively and lurid, regardless of its accuracy. One story, widely printed, had it that Miss Rappe was the bastard offspring of an English nobleman who had stayed in Chicago for a time—enjoying its famous hospitality, apparently.

Other articles pictured the obscure bit player (a "starlet" in today's parlance) as a famous actress, model, "and designer of women's clothes." One news service reporter wrote —with tongue in cheek, let us hope—that Miss Rappe "was reputed to have independent wealth as a result of oil investments."

Three trials gave the newspapers ample time to grope about for new and wilder material when the courtroom drama itself began to pall, which didn't happen often. The papers loved the case; it sold more newspapers, one publisher disclosed, than anything since the Armistice.

The bitter clashes between opposing counsel furnished the papers with much printable material. (after the second trial Dominguez withdrew from the case and Gavin McNab became chief defense counsel.) One day the district attorney denounced "this perjury and witness-bribing" and McNab replied caustically by asking, "When is he going to start in putting a stop to manufactured and perjured evidence?"

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The first trial, in November 1921, ended in a mistrial when the jury persisted in a ten to two vote for acquittal. Of the five women on the jury, three had voted for acquittal and one, Mrs. Helen M. Hubbard, for conviction. The fifth had wavered; although she believed Arbuckle guilty and thought he should be convicted, she agreed after the first ballot to change her vote from "guilty" to "not guilty." But Mrs. Hubbard clung to her "guilty" vote, and one male juror, who had wavered from side to side, finally settled down as a permanent ally of her. After forty-one hours of deliberation, the jury was excused.

Then it was learned that Mrs. Hubbard and her family had received threats aimed at forcing her to change her vote. An official investigation was begun, but nothing ever came of it.

The second trial in January 1922, also ended in a mistrial when the jury again found itself ten to two for acquittal after forty-four hours.

Then came the third trial, which ended April 12, 1922.

It is worth noting, incidentally, that all three trials were held within seven months after Miss Rappe's death. This kind of speedy justice, guaranteed under the Constitution, seems to have become mostly a memory in our present-day courts. Today three such trials would take at least that many years, and by the time they were over nobody would really care very much about a dead girl named Virginia Rappe or a living man named Roscoe Arbuckle.

After the third jury heard the evidence, it took just six minutes to acquit Arbuckle. It did more than that—it expressed its regret for the ordeal he had undergone.

"Acquittal is not enough for Roscoe Arbuckle," the jury said. "We feel a great injustice has been done him and there was not the slightest proof to connect him in any way with the commission of any crime."

It read like a studio flack's press release rather than a verdict. But that's California.

The jury had exonerated Roscoe Arbuckle, but the public never forgave Fatty Arbuckle. The public agreed with Lehrman, who said, "This is what comes of taking vulgarians from the gutter and giving them enormous salaries and making

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idols of them. Some people don't know how to get a kick out of life, except in a beastly way. They are the ones who participate in orgies that surpass the orgies of degenerate Rome."

(Lehrman also said, at the time of Arbuckle's arrest, "I want to live now to see that justice is not cheated. Nobody can pull me off. Arbuckle has powerful friends, and much influence and money will be used to save him. But he will have me to reckon with, even if he succeeds in buying his freedom."

(But after Arbuckle's acquittal, nothing more was heard from Lehrman.)

The three trials had cost Arbuckle more than one hundred thousand dollars, stripping him of his wealth, for he had never been a thrifty man. Indeed, Joe Schenck paid most of the legal fees. More importantly, the three trials cost Arbuckle his career.

Three Arbuckle films were "in the can," ready for release, when he was arrested. To this day they have never been shown publicly, and they probably never will be. And all of Arbuckle's earlier films were withdrawn from exhibition too.

Before the films were taken out of circulation, public officials all over the country had a holiday from civil liberties. Mayors and police chiefs everywhere were decreeing that no Arbuckle films were to be shown in their towns, although they had not the slightest legal justification for such high-handed actions. (They didn't charge that anything was wrong with the movies, just with the man who starred in them.) Who cared if such orders were unfair, unconstitutional, and unlawful —they were on the side of righteousness and morality, weren't they?

The theater owners and the film distributors weren't disposed to argue with the self-appointed censors. After all, it was less than a decade since movies had become respectable.

But the uproar against Hollywood continued, and finally the studio bosses decided to follow the example of organized baseball, which had rehabilitated itself in the public's mind after the "Black Sox" World Series "fix" scandal by hiring Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis as supreme arbiter.

The industry leaders knew just the man for their job. They had come to know him as chairman of the Republican Na-

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tional Committee during Warren G. Harding's successful bid for the Presidency the preceding year. He was now Postmaster General of the United States and an elder of the Presbyterian Church. He was forty-one-year-old William Harrison Hays. On December 8, 1921, the industry asked him to quit the government and become Hollywood's first "czar" at a salary of one hundred thousand dollars a year. On January 14, 1922, Will Hays, as he was usually called, accepted.

The ban on Arbuckle's films remained in effect by order of the Hays Office, as it came to be known, pending disposition of the charges against him. Hays took other actions designed to "clean up" Hollywood. He devised the "morality clause" which is still a part of contracts, posing a threat of contract cancellation over any actor who became involved in a scandal. He established the Central Casting Agency through which extras were hired, so that girls who went to Hollywood and turned to prostitution could be identified and barred from employment in the industry.

After Arbuckle's acquittal, Hays maintained a discreet silence for a few months and then suggested in a public statement that Arbuckle ought to be permitted to work in some capacity in the industry. "Every man in the right way and at the right time is entitled to his chance to make good," Hays said. "It is apparent that Roscoe Arbuckle's conduct since his trouble merits that chance. So far as I am concerned, there will be no suggestion now that he should not have his opportunity to go back to work in his own profession."

The groups that had denounced Arbuckle before rose up in wrath again at Hays' trial balloon. The New York State Federation of Churches, for example, passed a long-winded resolution charging that "to give Roscoe 'Fatty' Arbuckle another chance in motion pictures" would be to defy the parents of America and to condone "the capitalization of crime for financial gain," as well as to cripple efforts to "elevate the moral and artistic standards" of the motion picture industry.

That was how it went, through the length and breadth of the land. In Pittsburgh, the Pennsylvania Federation of Clubwomen, fifty thousand strong, protested. In Boston, the Massa-

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chusetts Federation of Churches shot off a hellfire-and-brimstone statement that would have warmed Cotton Mather's heart. The Rev. Dr. Russell H. Conwell, president of Temple University, joined in the hurrahing. So did Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf of Temple Keneseth Israel in New York City, just to show that the spirit of brotherhood still lived. The Women's Christian Temperance Union somehow managed to get into the act.

The editors even gave space to the president of the Hathaway Shakespeare Club, curiously. That good lady, Mrs. Charles Irving Purnell by name, was not one to mince words or let herself get confused by the Golden Rule. She laid it right on the line, saying, "We must stop letting down the bars in matters like this. If society allows itself to be guided entirely by the Gospel rule, 'Let him who is without sin cast the first stone,' no one would ever be convicted for a crime. I do not believe in such ready forgiveness. Arbuckle is not the proper person to appear before the public. He has misbehaved and deserves punishment at the hands of the public."

He got it.

In California, a few weeks after his acquittal, Arbuckle looked at a fancy scrolled checkbook sent to him as a present by one of his few well-wishers outside Hollywood.

"I don't see why I should be sent a checkbook," he said sadly. "I haven't money enough now to make out one check, much less make use of a whole book."

For eleven long years, Arbuckle paid the penalty. They were years that looked like a montage out of a grade B movie about show business—the old tearjerker about the veteran entertainer who keeps going downhill steadily, from one rough incident to another.

Arbuckle took a trip around the world, paid for by his Hollywood friends in the hope that the hue and cry would have died down by the time he got back; it didn't. He tried vaudeville and flopped; he just wasn't funny any more. There was melancholy even in his laughter; his jokes, no matter what the subject, sounded somehow bitter. He appeared tired, and he was—tired of living a death-in-life. He wanted

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desperately to live again, a free man, as he once had lived, but that was denied him. He began an act at a Culver City night club and Prohibition agents promptly raided the joint.

Buster Keaton got him a job directing a comedy under the pseudonym of William Goodrich, his mother's maiden name. (The wags said he should have taken the name Will B. Good, and today there are some people who still think he did take that name, so powerful is legend.) But Arbuckle couldn't direct comedy any more; he was short-tempered, grouchy, lacked patience, couldn't handle people. After he'd been working on the comedy a few days, William Randolph Hearst asked him to drop it and direct Hearst's "protege," Marion Davies, in a film of Victor Herbert's musical, *The Red Mill.* Arbuckle accepted, not knowing that Keaton had arranged the Hearst offer in order to ease Arbuckle off the comedy film. *The Red Mill* was a success of sorts, but it didn't give Arbuckle the comeback that he was always talking about.

He went on a road tour in a stage farce that flopped. He appeared in a revue in France, where his films had always had a big audience, and he was booed—not because of *l'Affaire Rappe* but because his comedy act was so bad.

Despite the friends who remained loyal, Arbuckle's life was lonely after the scandal. He and his wife had been estranged at the time of his arrest, but she had rejoined him until his acquittal, affirming her faith in his innocence at every opportunity. Two years after the trial she divorced him. His second marriage, to Doris Deane, brought all his Hollywood friends out to celebrate. That marriage ended in divorce in 1929. In 1932 Arbuckle married for a third time. The bride was Addie Oakley Dukes McPhail, an actress who had been divorced from her first husband a week earlier. She was twenty-six, Roscoe forty-five. They were appearing in a vaudeville act in Cleveland at the time, and they motored to Erie, Pennsylvania, and woke up a justice of the peace at 2:30 in the morning to perform the ceremony.

Tall and lovely, Addie appeared to be what Arbuckle had always needed. She taught him, gently, to husband his strength, to eat sensibly, to save his money, to keep himself

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occupied. She never criticized him, and yet she managed to blunt the edge of the scarcely masked belligerence which was beginning to mark Arbuckle's manner.

Almost immediately after the wedding, the tide appeared to turn for Arbuckle. He got a contract from Warner Brothers to do a comedy short. He ambled into the old Vitaphone studio in Brooklyn, slipped into his old No. 12 shoes and the grey trousers that measured seventy-five inches around his fifty-inch waist, palmed his familiar brown derby, and mugged at the camera, a movie actor come home.

"It's a big thrill," he said.

He felt good. He'd managed to pay off more than two hundred thousand dollars in debts over the past eleven years from what he had earned and, although he was not yet in the clear, he owed less than five thousand. He felt that this marriage, at last, was right for him. He had the proud knowledge that he had not surrendered, that he had gone on fighting for his professional life against seemingly impossible odds, and now, although he was starting at the bottom again with two-reelers, he had at least won a place for himself again in the medium he loved. He felt confident that he could be as funny as ever. And he had been blessed with what he considered a good omen: the first person he had seen after entering the studio was Joe Henaberry, a pal from the old Keystone Cops days and now a producer, who had directed Arbuckle's greatest success, *Brewster's Millions*.

Arbuckle thought he couldn't fail. For once, he was right. The first comedy pleased everybody at Warners and the studio contracted for some more comedy shorts. One June 28 he finished the last of the series at the studios in Astoria, Queens. During the last hour or two of work he stepped off the set and said to Ray McCarey, the director, "Do you mind if I knock off for a few minutes? I can't get my breath; I want a breath of fresh air."

After a short respite, he finished the picture in high spirits.

The following night there was a party to celebrate the first anniversary of Addie and Roscoe's wedding. William La Hiff, a restaurant owner, was the host, and the party was a gay affair, full of Broadway people who genuinely liked Arbuckle.

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To Joe Rivkin, his manager, Arbuckle said quietly during the party, "This is the happiest day of my life, Joe. It's a second honeymoon."

After the party began to break up, about midnight, Addie and Roscoe returned to their suite in the Park Central Hotel and retired for the night.

About 3 a.m. Addie awoke and spoke to Roscoe. He didn't answer. She shook him. There was no reaction.

Frightened—realizing what she refused to let herself think—she grabbed the telephone and called for the house doctor.

A few minutes later the doctor took his stethoscope from the great chest of Roscoe Arbuckle and straightened up.

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Arbuckle," the doctor said. "Your husband is dead."

The body lay in state in an undertaking establishment at Sixty-sixth Street and Broadway, in the same room from which Rudolph Valentino, Jeanne Engels, and June Matthews had been buried.

Two weeks later his widow reported to Surrogate's Court that Roscoe Arbuckle had left an estate of not more than two thousand dollars.

Twenty-five years later, plans were announced for a film based on Arbuckle's life, and the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce said that his name would be imbedded in a "Walk of Fame" as part of the "Hollywood Improvement Program."

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III — William Desmond Taylor: *Who Killed the Mystery Man?*

THE ARBUCKLE AFFAIR was still at its height—the comedian was awaiting his third trial—when the murder of William Desmond Taylor confronted Hollywood with a new scandal.

On January 14, 1922, Will Hays agreed to become the czar of the motion picture industry, and on March 6 he met for the first time with the biggest men in Hollywood to set about organizing the organization that became known as the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America.

Almost exactly midway between those two dates occurred the murder of Taylor, a handsome, cultivated former actor who had become chief director for Famous Players-Lasky Studios (later called Paramount) at a salary of one hundred thousand dollars a year. The murder, officially unsolved to this day, made Arbuckle's trouble appear like juvenile delinquency.

The Taylor case had everything—switched identities, a runaway husband and business man, sex, narcotics, gangsters, a disappearing witness, and innumerable celebrities. Before the furor subsided, the backwash from the case brought in the names of two of the top movie queens of the day, Mabel Normand and Mary Miles Minter.

Hollywood in its wildest moments would never have tried to sell a scenario as melodramatic and far-fetched as that to the public. But when life surpassed art, as it often does, Hollywood wished that it had never happened.

These were the principal figures in the strange story:

William Desmond Taylor—Nobody in Hollywood really knew much about the tall, patrician actor from England. He had appeared in the early 1910s as an actor in the movies. For

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several years he had worked as both actor and director before abandoning acting altogether. He had enlisted in the Canadian Army in 1918 but saw no action in the war. When he returned to Hollywood after the armistice he became not only a leading director but also president of the Motion Picture Directors Association.

At forty-five, Taylor was in his prime. Suave, soft-spoken, erudite, urbane, he charmed men and women alike. He had a considerable library and his conversation displayed an easy familiarity with its contents. Women usually found more than his mind to admire, and this didn't displease him at all. In a period when Hollywood made no pretense to morals, Taylor was considered a lecher of impressive proportions.

He often told his friends that he had never married.

Mabel Normand—A comic genius, Mabel Normand has seldom, if ever, been equalled by other film comediennes in the forty years since Taylor's murder.

She was born in Boston on November 10, 1894. When she was fourteen, she moved with her family to Staten Island in New York Harbor. The following year she was posing as a model for Charles Dana Gibson, James Montgomery Flagg, and other artists.

A photographer recommended her to a movie maker as "the prettiest girl in New York" when she was sixteen, and she was promptly hired as an actress. She worked for Vitagraph and Biograph.

It was then that she met Mack Sennett, who was also working for Biograph. Three years later, in California, Sennett began producing movies for the Keystone Film Company, and Mabel Normand, whom he had summoned from New York, starred in the first Keystone comedy, *Cohen at Coney Island.*

Mabel and Sennett, who was a dozen years older, fell in love almost from the moment they met, and for years their romance was one of the few stable relationships in the emotionally shaky world of the film. They were expected to marry, and in 1915 they set the date. But two weeks before the wedding, Mabel surprised Sennett in the bedroom of her best friend, another actress, and that ended everything.

Sennett lost not only a wife but an actress as well when Miss

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Normand walked out. She was better at improvisation than any of the others in the Keystone comedies, and they were all good. On the day the Sennett troupe arrived in Los Angeles by train, for example, they stepped right into the middle of a Shriners' parade.

Miss Normand promptly grabbed a doll from the station gift shop, cuddled it in her arms as though it were a baby, and barged into the parade. Stopping in front of a dignified-looking Shriner, as the Sennett camera ground away, she informed the world that he was the heartless father of her poor little child of shame. This caused a good deal of confusion and argument, compounded when the other Keystone actors, who had quickly donned police costumes, descended upon the parade to right the little lady's wrong. When the real cops moved in to break up the row the cameraman, hard at work in a car marked "Press," caught it all.

Even the Sennett trademark—the custard pie as a weapon—originated with Mabel Normand. In the middle of a scene she decided that it was flagging in interest. Spotting a pie that some stagehands were about to eat for lunch, she grabbed it and flung it into Ben Turpin's face. When one of Sennett's production assistants ran to the set to find out what the commotion was all about, Mabel demonstrated what had happened by picking up another pie and pushing it into *his* face. And all the time the cameras were grinding.

Mary Miles Minter—Hailed as a second Mary Pickford, Mary Miles Minter was a top ingenue in films, the epitome of innocent maidenhood.

But much of MMM—as her fans called her—was not what it appeared to be. She had been christened Juliet Reilly at birth. Her birthplace was Shreveport, Louisiana, and the date was April 1, 1892. But during her entire movie career, under the dominance of her mother, Mrs. Charlotte Shelby (who had divorced Mary's father and remarried), she managed to make everyone believe that she was ten years younger than her real age.

Separating fact from fiction in the biography of any movie actor has always been a difficult task; sometimes, as with Mary, it is impossible. She probably began her theatrical career as a

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child, for Mrs. Shelby was every inch the domineering stage mother. By 1915 MMM was appearing in *Barbara Frietchie*, looking, as always, girlish, demure, and wholly innocent.

These three—Mary Miles Minter, Mabel Normand, William Desmond Taylor—were all victims of the killer who struck so unexpectedly that night in 1922.

Billy Taylor, as his friends called him, lived in a two-story, Spanish-style stucco cottage that was one of eight in a little court not far from Wilshire Boulevard, slightly east of Hollywood proper, or improper, as the case may be. His address was 404-B South Alvarado Street, which is now occupied by a business concern. Across Alvarado was Westlake Park, which the moviemakers of the day often used in their films.

Of all the houses in the court, Taylor's was undoubtedly the most interesting. At almost any hour of the day or night his neighbors, if they were nosy, and it turned out that they were, could see women arriving or departing; the interval between was rarely less than an hour.

A few actresses boasted of the invitations they had received —and accepted—to his house, but there were others who sounded bitter when they talked about it, who said that his "invitations" were more like commands. And nobody thought that the dashing Mr. Taylor, intellectual as he might be, wanted to play chess with his lovely guests.

On the night of February 1, at 6 o'clock, Taylor called Mabel Normand and told her he had two books for her; he asked her to pick them up. She immediately had her chauffeur drive her to Alvarado Street. She arrived there at 6:45 p.m.

As Taylor's Negro butler, Henry Peavey, admitted her, Miss Normand could hear the director talking to someone on the telephone. Taylor sounded agitated.

When Taylor realized that Mabel was waiting in the living room, he hung up and went in to greet her. He told Peavey to fix a cocktail for them and invited his guest to stay for dinner.

"No, darling, but thank you," she said. "I told Davis to keep the motor running because I'd be out in a jiffy. I'm tired and I want to go home."

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Taylor said he was sorry. He produced the books, one about Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, the other an outline of German philosophy. "Sit down and I'll tell you about them," he suggested.

Peavey came in as the two sat on the couch talking about the books. The butler looked with dismay at the rug, where Miss Normand had been dropping peanut shells as she cracked them open for the nuts inside. He asked if Taylor wanted him to remain.

"You may go home, Henry," said Taylor.

Peavey left.

There was a pile of checks on Taylor's desk in the room. He had been working on his income tax return. (In those halcyon days the tax on an income like his—thirty-seven thousand dollars—was a mere four per cent.) That year Taylor had a special problem in computing his taxes, for in the year just past his valet, Edward F. Sands, had taken advantage of Taylor's absence in Europe to use his employer's charge accounts, pawn his jewelry, wreck two of his cars, and steal most of his clothes, vanishing just before Taylor returned. But even after Taylor's return, checks forged with Taylor's signature had been cashed at a great rate, and there had been two burglaries of the cottage as 1921 ended—all apparently the work of Sands.

"Look what that damned fellow Sands did to me," Taylor exclaimed to Miss Normand, pointing to the stack of checks. "Nearly every one of those checks is a forgery, and he did such a good job that to save my life I can't tell which are my signatures and which are his. I've been going over them about 20 times and I'm going mad!"

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" Miss Normand asked.

"If they ever find Sands, I'll do plenty," Taylor promised.

It had been about 7:15 when Peavey, who slept out, left the house. It was nearly 7:45 when Taylor walked Miss Normand to her car. The chauffeur, William Davis, held the door open for her. Taylor handed her the two books through the window.

Then Miss Normand was driven off in her car and Taylor went back into his cottage.

Both were unaware that one of Taylor's neighbors, Faith

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Cole McLean, first wife of actor Douglas McLean, had been an interested spectator of the leave-taking.

At 8:15 p.m., or thereabouts, Mrs. McLean's husband and two other residents of the court heard a sound that they decided later (the next day, in fact) must have been a shot. It couldn't have impressed them much at the time, for none of the three looked out.

However, a few minutes later Mrs. McLean did happen to look out her window. She saw a man leave the Taylor house through the alley next to the director's garage.

Shortly after 8:15, in fact, a man did go to Taylor's house. He was Taylor's chauffeur, Howard Fellows. In accordance with earlier instructions from Taylor, he had telephoned the director's house several times, getting no answer. So he went to the house and rang the doorbell. Still no answer. So he put the car away and went home.

Later in the evening Edna Purviance, the famous star who was Charlie Chaplin's leading lady at the time, saw lights on in Taylor's house; Miss Purviance lived in the court, too. She ran across to his cottage to visit him. She rang the doorbell, but got no answer. Puzzled, she went home, probably assuming that Billy Taylor was entertaining a feminine guest.

The stage was now set for Hollywood's most spectacular murder and one of its most earth-shaking scandals.

It was Peavey who discovered the body.

The butler arrived at the house at 7:30 in the morning, as was his wont. He picked up the milk, opened the back door with his key, and walked into the kitchen. It was not until he walked into the living room that he saw the body that had been Billy Taylor twelve hours earlier.

The dead man looked untroubled; his jacket was buttoned, his arms were at his side in relaxed fashion, his feet were together. He lay on his back near his desk.

"Mr. Taylor's dead! Mr. Taylor's dead!" Peavey shrieked as he ran out of the house into the court.

Doors and windows were thrown open hurriedly. Men and women appeared from all sides. There were excited voices. A crowd began to gather.

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McLean had been one of the first to respond to Peavey's frantic cries. The actor stopped a doctor who happened to be passing the court. The physician went into the Taylor house, listened for a heartbeat, pronounced the director dead.

"He died of a gastric hemorrhage," the doctor said, pointing to a small brown stain scarcely noticeable in the corner of Taylor's mouth. It was dried blood.

The doctor called the coroner and left.

In the meantime people had been arriving at Taylor's cottage: E. C. Jessurum, who owned the houses in the court; Charles Eyton, general manager of Famous Players-Lasky, and thus Taylor's boss; Harry Fellowes, Taylor's assistant director.

McLean, at the request of Eyton, carried Taylor's ample supply of illegal liquor away in order to spare his reputation —which was going to be hit by much nastier accusations, although Eyton didn't know it at the time. Fellowes, however, might have suspected what was to come, for he darted into the master bedroom in the confusion and collected letters and other memorabilia of past love affairs which might give some suspicious people ideas about Billy Taylor's morals.

As they stood about the body, several persons commented on how neatly the dead man lay there. As Eyton put it, "He looks almost as if he'd been laid out."

The assistant coroner, who had just arrived, nodded in agreement. The same thought had occurred to him. It suggested another, more sinister possibility to both him and Eyton.

"Turn him over!" Eyton cried. "Turn him over!"

The body was rolled over on its side. There was a dry brown stain on the carpet—and there were two bullet holes in Billy Taylor's back.

At that moment, for the first time, it was clear that the police were confronted with a case of murder.

Wild excitement flared through the crowd as the hushed word—"Murder!"—swept out from the house. Edna Purviance, who was in the house when the bullet wounds were discovered, stood still in horrified silence, but only for a moment.

Then she slipped away to make two telephone calls.

The first call was to Mabel Normand. She nearly collapsed

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at the news. A few minutes later, however, several policemen arrived to question her, accompanied by reporters who had already heard that she was the last person known to have seen Taylor alive. It was probably good for Miss Normand's state of mind that they did arrive; they forced her to think about more than her grief and horror.

The other call was to Mary Miles Minter, who was then thirty years old, pretended to be twenty, and looked fifteen. Edna Purviance knew that MMM had been in love with Taylor; everybody knew it. Mary wasn't home when Miss Purviance called but her mother was, and she took the message.

Mary and her sister, Margaret, had been staying with Mrs. Shelby's mother, Mrs. Julia Branch Miles. Mrs. Shelby sped to Mrs. Miles' Hobart Street house to acquaint her daughter with the news. But Mary saw her mother coming and locked herself in her room, so she didn't hear Mrs. Shelby's excited cry, "Children! Mr Taylor has been murdered!"

Mrs. Shelby kept pounding on the door to Mary's room.

"Open this door!" she demanded. "I have something to tell you!"

Finally her daughter opened the door.

"Mr. Taylor was found murdered in his bed this morning!" Mrs. Shelby told her, not altogether accurately (although anyone might be pardoned for assuming that such a connoisseur of women would meet his fate at the scene of his favorite activities).

"Where were you last night?" Mrs. Shelby suddenly asked Mary.

Mary didn't answer the question. Her face went white. She looked as though she were about to faint. Then she suddenly seemed to catch hold of herself. She began hunting wildly for her car keys.

And all the while her mother kept shrieking at her.

"You stay in this room and don't you dare leave until I tell you to," Mrs. Shelby shouted.

"Get away from that door!" Mary screamed back.

Mrs. Miles had the car waiting downstairs. She rode with her granddaughter to the bungalow court on Alvarado Street,

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but the police wouldn't let Mary into Taylor's house, despi an hysterical outburst by the young actress outside.

Then Mary Miles Minter drove to Mabel Normand's hom for a woman-to-woman talk.

It would be interesting to know what those two women sai to each other, for both had been understood to be engaged t Taylor. One was a great star and comic genius whom the di rector had found fascinating, the other was a top star and in genue, off screen as well as on, who had found the director fascinating.

Each had a career at stake that day and both of them, eve burdened with grief, knew it. Neither was taking any chances After Mary arrived, Mabel took her into the bathroom fo their private conversation "just in case there are any listenin devices stuck around here," said Mabel, although "bugging" machines were uncommon then.

Nobody will ever know for sure just what was said in tha room.

Back at Taylor's house, the police were searching for clues They found that the bullet holes in Taylor's suit coat did not line up with the holes in his vest. They theorized that he had been seated at his desk, bent over writing, with his jacket higher than it would normally hang, when he was shot from behind.

Outside the back door was a pile of cigarette butts, proof that somebody had stood there, chain-smoking, apparently while Mabel Normand was visiting Taylor. It could have been the killer.

There was ample evidence of Billy Taylor's love affairs. In the living room were framed photographs of Miss Normand and Miss Minter, both ardently inscribed.

There was a scented note on stationery monogrammed "MMM". The note wasn't long, but it made its point. It read:

"Dearest—
"I love . . . I love you . . . I love you. . . .
"X X X X X X X X X X X X X X!
"Yours always,
"Mary"

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They also found a handkerchief bearing Mary's monogram. There were other items of interest in Taylor's house, including women's panties and sheer nightgowns. There were letters, too—dozens of love letters from many different women.

Some of the letters were in a code which was soon deciphered. One of the cipher letters went like this:

"What shall I call you, you wonderful man? You are outstanding on the lot, the idol of an adoring company. You have just come over and put your coat on my chair. I want to go away with you, up in the hills or anywhere, just so we'd be alone—all alone. In a beautiful woodland lodge you'd be the cook (as I can only make tea) and fetch the water and build the fire. Wouldn't it be glorious to sit in a big, comfy couch by a cozy, warm fire with the wind whistling outside, trying to harmonize with the faint strains of music coming from the Victrola . . . and then you'd have to take off the record.

"Of course I don't mean that, dear. Do you really suppose I intended you to take care of me like a baby? Oh, no, for this is my part: I'd sweep and dust (they make the sweetest little dust caps, you know) and tie fresh ribbons on the snowy white curtains and feed the birds and fix the flowers and—oh, yes—set the table and help you wash the dishes and then in my spare time darn your socks.

"I'd go to my room and put on something scant and flowing; then I'd lie on the couch and wait for you. I might fall asleep, for a fire makes me drowsy. Then I'd wake to find two strong arms around me and two dear lips pressed on mine in a long, sweet kiss. . . ."

There was another paragraph in that letter, but it was too graphic an account of what would follow the kiss to be printed here.

The young woman who wrote the letter was obviously of an ardent nature.

Another cipher letter, decoded, read:

"I love you—oh, I love you so! I had to come down because Mamma remarked that I always seemed to feel rather happy after being out with you. So here I am. Camouflage.

"Furthermore, I am feeling unusually fine. (More camouflage.) I will see you later. God love you, as I do."

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There were other clues, including a handkerchief initialed "S" which was near Taylor's body when he was found and three blonde hairs found beneath the collar of the coat the director was wearing when he was slain.

Robbery was definitely not the motive. When his body was found, Taylor was still wearing his two-carat diamond ring and his platinum wrist watch and in his pockets the police found seventy-eight dollars.

But what was the motive?

Detectives got wind of a row between Mabel Normand and Billy Taylor and questioned her about it. The argument had occurred a month earlier, on New Year's Eve.

At that time the two were understood to be engaged. Taylor took Miss Normand to a party at the Alexandria Hotel, then a favorite night spot. But he became angry with her because he thought she drank too much and flirted with many of the men.

"I said to him, 'For God's sake, why do you stand around with that trick dignity of yours? You make me sick!' or something like that," Miss Normand told the police.

"And he said, 'I'm not trying to be dignified. Good God, don't you know I like you?' And I said, 'Good God, don't be so melodramatic!' and then I guess I sulked and wouldn't talk and he left me with a hurt expression."

A few days later it was learned that the dead man's house had been ransacked a day or two after the murder. To this day nobody really knows what the intruder was searching for, but his—or her—object may have been other letters.

Mabel Normand, for example, had written eight or nine love letters to Taylor, and after his death she sought them in a drawer of his desk, where she knew he always kept them. They weren't there.

At this point Miss Normand, on the verge of a nervous breakdown, admitted hysterically that she had gone to Taylor's house on the night of the murder, not to borrow the books, but to get her letters back. When she arrived at his house, she said, Taylor told her that he had mailed the letters to her the day before.

"I replied that they had not yet arrived," Miss Normand

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said, "and then he said, 'I think either Eyton or Garbutt has them.' "

A week after the murder, while Eyton and some detectives were in Taylor's house, the letters were found in the toe of one of his boots in the closet of his bedroom—having obviously been placed there after the discovery of the crime.

It was never established who put them there.

The greatest sensation in the case came a few days later.

The public, which had been avidly reading everything that was printed about the Taylor murder, and Hollywood, which had been worried by the possible consequences of the case, were equally startled to learn that William Desmond Taylor had been engaged in an elaborate masquerade.

He was not at all the man they had thought him to be.

His real name, they learned, was William Cunningham Deane-Tanner, nicknamed "Pete" in his youth. He was born in Ireland, in County Cork, in 1877, the son of a British army officer. Pete's father was one of three brothers, two of whom died under mysterious circumstances in Ireland. Pete's grandfather, a physician in Cork, also met a violent end; his mangled body was found near a railroad track, and the circumstances of his death remained unexplained.

His father had wanted Pete to become an army officer, too, but the boy's eyesight was not up to army standards. Pete went to Clifton College at Bristol, registering under the Taylor pseudonym—why, no one knows. He left Clifton in 1895 and went into show business as secretary to a theatrical troupe then playing in Manchester. His father, disappointed and angered, sent him to work on a ranch in Kansas. From there the youth made his way to New York.

There Pete and his brother, Denis, operated a Manhattan art and antiques shop (Taylor was still using his real name, Deane-Tanner). Pete married one of the original Floradora Girls who bore him a daughter. They lived in the fashionable suburb of Larchmont.

Mrs. Deane-Tanner's uncle was Daniel J. Braker, a multimillionaire realtor and importer. Pete borrowed a great deal of money from Braker but confided to his friends that his extravagances were all right because he expected to be taken

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care of handsomely in Braker's will. In June, 1907, however, Braker married Mrs. William H. Gelshenen, who was called "the ten million dollar widow" when Braker died a year later.

In October, 1908, Braker's will was filed for probate. One of its clauses read:

"To W.C.D. Tanner, I leave and bequeath the amounts of money owing to me by him."

Pete's hopes of a big legacy were completely destroyed. Financial and personal disaster faced him, unless he could think of a way out of his difficulties.

On October 23, 1908, Pete left his home and went to the city, where he began to drink heavily. He didn't go to the shop or back to his home that night.

On the next day, October 24, he attended the Vanderbilt Cup race on Long Island with some friends.

On October 26 he sent a note to his assistant at the art shop, asking that six hundred dollars be sent to him at the Broadway Central Hotel. The assistant found Deane-Tanner there, weary and haggard, and with his mustache shaved off. Pete pocketed one hundred dollars and mailed five hundred to his wife.

Then he vanished. His family never saw him again.

His brother Denis, who had always depended on him, lost the shop and went to work managing another art shop on East Forty-Fifth Street.

A month after Pete's disappearance, Denis' wife presented him with a daughter. Two years later a second child was born. At that time the Denis Deane-Tanner's lived at 247 West One Hundred and Fourth Street.

In 1912 Pete's wife obtained a New York divorce, not for desertion, which was and is not grounds for divorce in New York state, but for adultery. Under the name of "Townsend," Mrs. Deane-Tanner said, her husband had spent a week at an Adirondacks hotel with a beautiful girl some time before his disappearance.

In the same year, 1912, Denis' wife developed tuberculosis and was sent to the Adirondacks for treatment. While she was in the sanitorium, Denis followed his brother's example.

Denis vanished, too.

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Two years later, in 1914, some friends of Mrs. Deane-Tanner went to see a movie in the Hamilton Theater in Yonkers. They were astonished to see that the male lead was Pete Deane-Tanner himself, although he was listed in the credits as William Desmond Taylor (he had kept the same initials, as most men using false names do).

There was a second surprise in the film—the blacksmith was played by Pete's brother Denis!

The friends quickly told Pete's ex-wife, who wrote to Taylor in care of the studio. He began a regular correspondence with her and their daughter. Later that year his ex-wife married the owner of Delmonico's Restaurant.

None of this, of course, had been known to Billy Taylor's friends in Hollywood.

With this new information about Taylor's background, some things began to make sense to the police, at least in theory. For example, Sands—Taylor's larcenous valet—had pawned the goods he had stolen from Taylor. Sands gave the pawnbroker the name of William Cunningham Deane-Tanner, Taylor's real name, which was unknown to Hollywood. Moreover, Sands had mailed the pawn tickets to Denis' wife, who was living at Monrovia, near Pasadena, on a fifty-dollar a month pension from Taylor.

Was Sands really Denis Deane-Tanner?

To this day no one knows.

But even allowing for the knowledge that a valet may gain about his master, Sands seems to have been far too familiar with Billy Taylor's background to have been merely a manservant. But if he were Sands, why did he pillage his brother's house and bank account in his absence?

Again we come to a stone wall: no one knows.

Sands, who had disappeared before Taylor returned from Europe, has never been found. The police searched all over the world for him for more than a quarter of a century, even exhuming a body from a Hartford, Connecticut grave because they thought it might be he. It wasn't.

If Sands were alive today he'd be about seventy. Is he alive? Could he have been murdered, too?

The questions are innumerable. There are no answers.

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The theories about Taylor's death opened a tremendous range of suspects. Narcotics opened a whole world of speculation, for example.

A few weeks before his death Taylor had gone to the federal narcotics agents of his own volition to tell them what he knew about the dope traffic in Hollywood. In our time there is a thriving traffic in narcotics in Hollywood, but in Taylor's time narcotics addiction was almost epidemic.

Taylor didn't use drugs, but Mabel Normand was an addict, and it was apparently his bitterness about her addiction that led him to the federal men.

Had the director become a menace to the freedom and peace of mind of the gangsters behind the narcotics ring?

Narcotics, sex, and blackmail were all tied together in many ways. Taylor had been deeply involved in the hectic sex life of Hollywood. Police were already aware that a good many blackmailers, preying on the stars' weaknesses for sex and drugs, were busily at work mining the gold in the Hollywood Hills.

Had Taylor threatened to turn the tables on a blackmailer and expose him—or had someone suspected, because of the variety of Taylor's sex life, that the director was feeding information to blackmailers?

The gangsters—this was in the Roaring Twenties, when the gangs rode high—had been moving in on Hollywood. There was a rumor that Taylor had had a falling out with a bootlegger who supplied a large part of the liquor consumed in Hollywood.

Was the Taylor murder a gang rub-out?

And then there were other problems to consider. Mabel Normand had quarreled bitterly with Taylor a month earlier. Mrs. Shelby had a .38 caliber pistol just like the one that shot Taylor. Mary Miles Minter had been staying out very late at night for some time before the murder. Peavey, Taylor's butler, had been arrested on a morals charge in a park a short time before the murder, although he protested his innocence in his high, falsetto voice.

Who killed William Desmond Taylor, the last of a blood-

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stained Irish line? A castoff woman? A jealous man? His brother (Sands?)? A blackmailer? A narcotics racketeer? A bootlegger?

The suspects, like the possible motives, were legion. Nobody ever was able to single out one suspect and one motive and say, "This is why Billy Taylor died, and this is his murderer."

Unlike movie killers, who must always meet their doom in the end, Billy Taylor's murderer escaped, undetected to this day.

In the end, careers were ruined and reputations destroyed, and all for naught.

Mabel Normand emerged from the scandal with only a precarious hold on her career. The public, linking her with all the vice that was being exposed in Hollywood, took a rather dim view of her for a time, but she was not driven into complete exile, as Arbuckle was.

But her bad luck still pursued her—undoubtedly because her judgment had not improved. Late in December 1923 her physician ordered Mabel into a hospital for an appendectomy.

"Whoever heard of appendicitis on New Year's Eve?" she snorted. "Not I. Tonight I'll see the old year out. They can have my appendix tomorrow."

She went from the doctor's office to the home of Edna Purviance, arriving early for a New Year's Eve party. Later that night Courtland S. Dines, a Denver oil millionaire, caught a bullet from a gun fired by Mabel's chauffeur, Horace A. Greer, whom she had hired after the Taylor murder.

Dines recovered and Greer was released by police, but the full fury of public indignation fell upon Mabel Normand this time. The general belief was that the shooting had been the result of an argument over her favors. As Gene Fowler later wrote, "A lady is fortunate, indeed, if she can explain one scandal. The woman never lived who was resourceful enough to explain two."

Her career was over. Even her being named co-respondent in a divorce suit a year later couldn't make her troubles any worse.

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Still in love with her, Mack Sennett starred her in two films, *Susanna* and *The Extra Girl*. Both were boycotted all over the country.

"It's no use," she said. "I'm a liability to everyone."

Financially secure—she had invested her money carefully, most of it in real estate that kept appreciating in value—Mabel went into an enforced retirement. She continued to live as part of the film colony, however.

In 1926 she attempted a screen comeback in a Hal Roach film, *Raggedy Ann*. But the public had neither forgotten nor forgiven—as though Miss Normand had done anything requiring the forgiveness of the fickle public! Moviegoers remained away from her picture, which proved to be a devastating box office flop.

After a party in her home one night, she went with Lew Cody, an old friend and co-worker of many years, woke up a license clerk and a minister in Ventura, and married Cody, one of the Keystone comedy stars. That was September 19, 1926. It was an unusual marriage, to say the least: they maintained her house and his, lived first at one, and then at the other.

On February 22, 1930, she died in her sleep in a hospital at Monrovia, after more than a year of fighting the slow advance of tuberculosis.

Toward the end of the following year, Peavey, Taylor's butler, died of general paresis in a mental hospital at Napa.

The only major figures in the case who remained alive were Mary Miles Minter and her mother, Mrs. Shelby.

For Mary, the Taylor murder had proved disastrous, too.

It had been rather romantic at first. When she kissed her dead lover's lips before the funeral, she told reporters, she had been rewarded with a whisper from that lifeless mouth, "I shall love you always, Mary." The tabloids played up her ghoulish yarn for all it was worth.

In a short time, however, it became apparent that MMM was through in motion pictures, despite the efforts of some leaders of the industry to save her career (and their investment in her pictures). As the widely publicized, sweet, young innocent, she had the most to lose in a scandal. Her public

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nage—as a later generation would put it—had been de-
royed. The public wasn't in a mood for her films.

Moreover, scandal was piled on scandal for Mary as the in-
estigation progressed. One of the more fantastic incidents
hat came to light involved the celebrated actor, James Kirk-
ood, who had been one of Mary's first directors.

When Mary was believed by her public and her movie asso-
iates to be fifteen, she and Kirkwood went wandering hand
n hand through the countryside near Santa Barbara. Carried
way by their grand passion, they decided to "marry" each
ther on the spot—without benefit of clergy.

So Kirkwood lifted Mary up on a rock, knelt at her feet,
nd said, "I, James, take you, Mary, for my wife in the sight
f God."

This bit would be too corny for a modern teenager, but
hose were less sophisticated times. The whole thing went over
ig with Mary—too big, according to later testimony by her
ister Margaret.

Little Mary fell for the mock ceremony so completely, ac-
ording to her sister's sworn testimony, that she later became
regnant. The unfortunate aftermath was an abortion, said
Margaret.

Kirkwood refused to discuss the matter because "it wouldn't
e gallant." What he didn't say was that he was already le-
ally endowed with a wife at the time of the incident. She was
Gertrude Robinson, his first wife. Later he married—in the
yes of the law as well as God—Lila Lee and, still later, Bea-
rice Powers. He never married Mary Miles Minter legally.

The scandals also brought to light the life that Mary had
led under her mother's domination. Norman Sterry, an attor-
ney who opposed both Mrs. Shelby and Mary in one court
ight, said:

"Up to the time she became of age, Mary turned over all
her earnings to Mrs. Shelby. After she became of age, her
mother signed a contract with her through which she was to
receive thirty per cent of her earnings.

"The fact is that Mary was allowed nothing, while her sister,
Margaret, had everything. Mary was violently unhappy dur-
ing those years, for her mother and sister were accusing her of

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intimacies with men and keeping her indebted to them at all times."

Mary Miles Minter earned more than a million and a half during her movie career. In 1924 she and her mother set up a trust fund which was terminated by court order at their request in 1956. At that time the account was said to amount to one hundred thousand dollars.

For a time, after the murder, Mary and her mother were estranged. Everybody in Hollywood had known that Mrs. Shelby had been doing everything possible to end the romance between her daughter and the dashing director. But it was not until two years after the slaying, when Mary unburdened herself publicly, that a reason for her mother's attitude was exposed.

"Mother's actions over Mr. Taylor's attention to me," Mary said, "were not inspired by a desire to protect me from him. She was really trying to shove me into the background so that she could try to monopolize his attentions and, if possible, his love.

"He used to call at our house. But as soon as mother saw his preference for me she put a stop to his visits. . . . She cared for him herself."

In the years that followed, the focus of the investigation swung about from one person to another, from this place to that. Within six weeks of the murder, three hundred men and women had confessed to it, including some in Europe. A Tucson accountant was detained as a hot suspect; he was later released, cleared of any connection with the crime. As late as 1937 newspapers were still carrying headlines that the case had been broken, but the papers were skeptical. A typical headline said: "Taylor Murder Is Solved Again."

But back to Mrs. Shelby and her daughters came the investigators, again and again.

Mrs. Shelby was accused by a witness of having gone to Taylor's house and threatened him. She denied it.

Police found .38 caliber bullets in the foundation of a house Mrs. Shelby had lived in on New Hampshire Street. She said she knew nothing about them.

A broker who embezzled some of her money told Mrs.

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Shelby that he'd have her indicted for the Taylor murder if she complained about him. She had him sent to prison for the embezzlement. She was not indicted.

Mrs. Shelby and Margaret had a row, and Margaret, her favorite daughter, went off to the police with a new story. She said her mother had tossed "the gun" into the river at Kansas City on her way to New York by train. Mrs. Shelby promptly had Margaret committed to the psychopathic ward of the Los Angeles County Hospital, saying she'd been an alcoholic for three years and didn't know what she was talking about. A grand jury looked into the whole mess but returned no indictment.

About the same time, the district attorney announced officially that Mary Miles Minter had never been under suspicion for the crime. He did not say anything about her mother.

Mary never married. Under the name of Juliet Shelby she became a successful interior decorator in Los Angeles. She took care of her mother, who was still alive at eighty-four.

As far as the district attorney's office is concerned, the file on the murder of William Desmond Taylor is still open.

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IV — Paul Bern:
Why Did Jean Harlow's Husband Die?

FOR A DECADE after the scandals that brought the Hays Office into being there was relative tranquillity—on the surface—in Hollywood. There were several reasons for this. One was that the stars were behaving with slightly more circumspection now, the example of Arbuckle, Minter, Normand, LaMarr, and many others still fresh in their minds. Many of those fallen stars were still around Hollywood in those days. Another reason was the organized power and unity of the motion picture industry. Politicians who were unwilling to grant special favors to the industry were ruthlessly fought. Police chiefs were brought under the heel of the studio bosses. The Hollywood correspondents were systematically prostituted; those who insisted on covering *all* the news, the unfavorable as well as the favorable, were barred from access to the stars and other studio personnel. Without entre to the sources of news, these honest correspondents were scooped every day; they lost their usefulness to their newspapers. In time, they were replaced with reporters who were more willing to close their eyes to the seamy side of Hollywood. A few honest reporters stuck it out, of course, but they were a lonely lot.

Of course, there were a few flurries in spite of everything, but they didn't amount to much. Chicago mobster Spike O'Donnell tried to get Hollywood to let him become an actor —he wanted to play Robin Hood—but the studios turned him down, despite his obvious merits as an expert on the subject. Clara Bow, the "It" girl, attracted a good deal of attention with her scorching love affairs with Gary Cooper, Harry Richman, Gilbert Roland, director Victor Fleming, and innumerable football players, cops, and other odd and assorted

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varieties of men. Miss Bow's reputation was damaged beyond repair in 1930 when her ex-secretary, Daisy De Voe, during a court battle with Clara, testified that the "It" girl used up her huge income on one parasitic boy friend after another. Paramount dropped her the next year.

By that time the "It" girl had already lost her place as the foremost sex queen of Hollywood to a newcomer, Jean Harlow. Before two years of her reign had expired, Miss Harlow would be involved in the biggest scandal in a decade—a scandal involving the mysterious death of her bridegroom, the suicide of his former mistress, and the threat of a criminal indictment against the star herself!

Jean Harlow was a platinum blonde (she dyed her hair but didn't admit it even to her press agent) who looked brassy, sounded brassy, and played brassy parts. And there were those in Hollywood who swore that her heart was solid brass, too. But then, there are always people who'll say things like that in Hollywood.

Her real name was Harlean Carpenter. She was born in Kansas City on March 3, 1911. She was destined to have a short life; whether it was merry only she could have said, but an objective observer would tend to doubt that there was much merriment in it, except on the surface. Harlean Carpenter was a fey creature, and she always seemed to sense her fate.

Before she was sixteen her parents separated. Her mother lived in Highland Park, a suburb of Chicago. It was there that young Harlean met Charles F. McGrew II, playboy son of a rich Chicago family. She was sixteen, he twenty-one, when they ran off to nearby Waukegan and were married on September 21, 1927. The young couple went to Beverly Hills to live, probably because Harlean wanted to break into the movies. Under the name Jean Harlow she got extra work in several films, including one in which Clara Bow starred.

McGrew objected to his young wife's attempts to break into the movies, but she paid little attention to his protests. Finally she sued for divorce. McGrew, back in Chicago by then, decided to fight the divorce action. In his reply to her complaint,

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he told the court that Jean had posed for indecent pictures. She, in turn, conceded that she had posed *au naturel,* but she insisted that she had bared her charms only for "art photographs" taken by a reputable photographer. In the end, Jean and her husband agreed to a quiet divorce. He agreed to give her their house in Beverly Hills, and an automobile and to pay her an allowance of $375 a month—not bad money in those Depression days.

Just how Jean Harlow got her big break in films is still unclear. But it was Howard Hughes who discovered her, and Hughes' quaint and less than Victorian attitude toward women has long been a Hollywood legend, off screen as well as on. Petite (five foot three) and trim (one hundred and twelve pounds), the blue-eyed blonde with the dark eyebrows was just the sort of girl who'd interest Hughes. As an actress.

Hughes had a picture, *Hell's Angels,* which had been completed as a silent movie with Greta Nissen as the star. Then the talkies became the rage overnight. Nobody wanted to see a silent movie any more. *Hell's Angels* had to be remade with dialogue. Jean Harlow got the feminine lead.

With the role—the picture was about fliers in the first World War—Jean also began her big publicity buildup. The first publicity picture of her in a Los Angeles newspaper carried the caption: "Sexquisite." Besides her platinum blonde hair, she became notable for her dresses, which were cut very low in front. This seemed a little pointless, for she was not particularly buxom, at least not by present day standards.

Hell's Angels made Jean Harlow an immediate sensation. It was obvious that the process, not altogether deliberate, that produces a Nita Naldi, a Clara Bow, a Rita Hayworth, a Kim Novak, a Marilyn Monroe was at work. In later days, Jean would have been called a "sex bomb," as Miss Hayworth, Miss Novak, and Miss Monroe one day were to be. Miss Harlow was the rage of Hollywood. She was the hottest copy of the press corps.

The columns were filled with her dates, but observant readers might have noticed that she scarcely, if ever, went out with actors. Her escorts were always producers or directors. Perhaps Jean Harlow, a girl who knew how to take care of her-

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self, had watched Norma Shearer and taken lessons from the career of that actress, who had married Irving Thalberg, production boss at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, and had promptly become the No. 1 actress on the lot.

It was a coincidence that Jean's next picture, *Red-Headed Woman,* was made for M-G-M. Thalberg's general assistant, Paul Bern, had persuaded Hughes to sell Jean's contract to M-G-M. Then Bern had fought to get the *Red-Headed Woman* lead for Miss Harlow. After that Bern starred her in *Jungle Skies.* The leading role in the latter screenplay had been intended originally for Clara Bow. The circle had now come full tilt. Clara Bow's role had gone to a girl who once had been an extra in the "It" girl's pictures.

In the tradition of all the cliché-ridden films about Hollywood, a star had been born—thanks to Paul Bern.

It would be difficult to find two people more unalike than Jean Harlow and Paul Bern.

In the files of one New York newspaper today, the files on tens of thousands of persons are tabbed with an identifying phrase: "inventor," "painter," and so on. The envelope that contains the old, yellowed, crumbling clippings about this man is labeled: "Paul Bern—Genius."

That is how most of his contemporaries thought of Bern. Introspective, intellectual, sensitive, esthetic, humane, he would have been rare in any group of men. That such a man could find a niche for himself—and a very comfortably, profitable niche, at that—in Hollywood proves that the motion picture industry had a higher regard for intelligence than it was usually credited as possessing.

He was born Paul Levy, in Wannsbeck, Germany, on December 3, 1889, which made him twenty-two years older than Jean Harlow. His parents migrated to New York when he was nine. At fourteen his formal schooling ended, although those who met him later in life always assumed that he was highly educated. He was—but he was self-educated.

His first job was with the Produce Exchange Company; he earned $3.50 a week. Then he worked for the gas company while learning stenography in night school. After he got a job

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as a stenographer, he began to write. He entered the Academy of Dramatic Arts and then devoted his entire time to the theater, first as an actor with a small travelling troupe, later as a stage manager, and finally, in 1912, as director of a stock company.

After a brief stint as a press agent, he got into the motion picture business by going to work for the Canadian Picture Company in Toronto. He also changed his name to Paul Bern. He quickly realized that everything important in pictures was developing in Hollywood, so he headed West. After landing a job as a film cutter in Samuel Goldwyn's laboratory, he worked his way into the scenario department, became a script editor, directed some movies, and at thirty-seven, became a supervisor at M-G-M. It was not long before he became Thalberg's general assistant.

In a remarkably prophetic article, Herbert Knight Cruikshank, writing in *The Morning Telegraph* in 1927, said, "Meet Paul Bern, and know that you stand in the presence of one blessed or cursed with the fearsome, terrible quality that sears souls, destroys the minds it so brilliantly lights, that with the fiery fury of a flagellant whips its slaves on to accomplishment —to immortality—to death. I mean the tragic quality of genius."

A trifle flowery, perhaps, but unquestionably true of Paul Bern.

Cruikshank described Bern for his readers: "A slight man, insignificant in stature, slender of shoulder, only as tall as a girl. He has a deal of forehead, topped with a mop of hair, soft and fine spun—beautiful, perhaps, in a woman, in a man quite probably presaging premature baldness. . . . The eyes . . . are slightly bulging and deeply circled with a sooty rim that seems to make them smoulder and then flash fire much in the fashion of live coals lying in the smoky gray and burned-out black of ashes."

The brilliance of intellect was accompanied by a temperament far more compassionate than most. "Hollywood's Father Confessor," they called him. Everybody took his troubles to Paul Bern for advice, sympathy, and help. When Barbara

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LaMarr, poverty-stricken, was dying from the results of her addiction, Bern bought her a house in Altadena, hired the best doctors and 'round-the-clock nurses, and was at her bedside himself when death came.

There was one peculiarity about Bern. He thought that every movie ought to have a happy ending. Perhaps his feeling was prompted by the same sensitivity to other people's sorrows that made him such a friend in need. Sad endings left the audience depressed.

He hated unhappy endings.

Bern took little part in Hollywood's party life. Indeed, he was considered something of a mystery man. He lived in such an out-of-the-way place that he had to put a sign on the highway, beside a little dirt road, saying: "This way to Bern's house." He spent a good part of his time secluded in his home, reading. Occasionally he appeared at the bigger, and more conventional, parties (never the wild ones) and from time to time he might be seen in a night club.

When he began appearing in public with Jean Harlow, nobody placed any significance in it. Everyone was startled, therefore, when the couple showed up at the Marriage License Bureau to obtain a wedding permit. "We were surprised ourselves," Miss Harlow said. "Mr. Bern did not make the proposal until Sunday, and I accepted. We had casually spoken of marriage before, but not until Sunday was the subject seriously gone into. It was then we decided to get a license." The next day Jean dashed into a fashionable dress shop and chose a ready-made white dress with a fringed shawl to be her wedding gown. And the day after that they gathered with one hundred and fifty friends in the home of Jean's mother, who was now married to Marino Bello. Among the guests were Irving Thalberg and his wife, Norma Shearer.

And there—on July 2, 1932—they were married—the fey actress and the genius with death in his eyes.

Work commitments forced them to postpone their honeymoon for a few months. They took one day off from work, then returned to the studio.

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In the weeks that followed, Jean looked radiant. She often told her friends, "Paul is so magnificently eager to make me happy, I will never do anything to make him unhappy."

And Bern, enjoying a quiet drink with a couple of close friends, told them, "After we were married a week I realized how wonderful Jean is. I'm more in love with her than ever. If my life were ended tomorrow I would have no complaint. I could only say it was full and complete because of the happiness I've had with Jean as my wife."

But as the weeks wore on, others noticed that Paul Bern didn't look happy. He seemed distraught. He was pale, almost haggard. Thalberg and other friends tried to indicate tactfully that they'd be available to talk over things if anything were troubling Paul, but he never took them up on the offers. If something was festering in his mind, he kept it to himself.

Inevitably, speculation turned to Bern's marriage. It was rumored that the couple were quarrelling about money. One of the arguments, it was said, centered about the mansion that he had given her as a wedding present. The house was set in the midst of five acres of land in Benedict Canyon. In 1932, that year of Depression when deflation had sent the value of the dollar skyrocketing, the mansion had cost sixty thousand dollars; an equivalent estate today would cost perhaps a quarter of a million dollars. But Jean didn't like the great house. She wanted to sell it and buy another house closer to her mother.

For Jean was, as Bern had come to learn, very much a "mama's girl."

On September 1 Bern was examined by a physician for the Prudential Life Insurance Company. The physician approved him as a good risk. Bern had applied for an eighty-five thousand dollar policy.

Four days later—on September 5, 1932, two months after his marriage—Paul Bern was found shot to death in the Benedict Canyon house.

The butler found the body. He went running for his wife who was the cook. Then he called M-G-M at once. The studio security officer in charge that day—it was Labor Day—imme-

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diately notified the head of security for the studio, W. P. (Whitey) Hendry, who was at home in Santa Monica. Hendry put in two fast phone calls, to Louis B. Mayer, the head of M-G-M, and to Thalberg, and then sped to Benedict Canyon.

Mayer beat him there. Thalberg and Hendry were next on the scene. *But it was not until two hours later that the police were notified of the death!* What happened in those two hours will probably never be known.

When the police finally arrived, Mayer left. As he drove down the driveway, he spotted Howard Strickling, the publicity chief for the studio, who was just arriving. Strickling stopped and Mayer and he talked briefly.

"Paul left a note," Mayer told him. "I decided it shouldn't be seen by anyone outside the studio, Howard, so I took it. Here it is."

Strickling was aghast.

"You can't do that," he told his boss. "This is a homicide investigation. If anyone ever finds out you took that, there'll be a God-awful stink. You've got to go back and give it to the cops."

Mayer turned around and drove back to the house. He gave the note to the police.

The note read:

"Dearest dear:

Unfortunately, this is the only way to make good the frightful wrong I have done you and to wipe out my abject humiliation. I love you.

Paul."

A postscript said:

"You understand that last night was only a comedy."

The police read the note, tried for a moment to figure out its meaning, and then went back to examining the body.

Bern had been shot while standing, nude, before a full-length mirror in his dressing room. The bullet, a .38 caliber slug, had entered his right temple, torn through his brain, and emerged at the back of the head to bury itself in the wall. The body was lying face down, the head turned with the right cheek against the carpet. The death weapon, a revolver, lay

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six feet from the body. On the dresser in his bedroom was another pistol, a .38 caliber automatic.

Detective Joseph Whitehead, who took charge of the investigation, said it was obviously a "straight suicide." But Chief of Detectives Taylor said there were discrepancies in the suicide theory. He ordered a more intensive investigation. Among other things, he wanted to know the reason for the long delay in notifying the police.

As part of the investigating group began going over the house and grounds, others questioned the gardener and the chauffeur. Still more detectives were sent to the Bello home to question Miss Harlow. They were unable to do so for some time, however, because her physician had decided she was too hysterical to undergo the ordeal.

Reporters outside the Bello home heard the famous Harlow voice cry out, again and again, "Isn't this too terrible! But I mustn't talk about it—I can't! I can't!"

Police said that the servants had all told them that Miss Harlow and her husband had gotten along very well together. (This would be disputed much later.)

Eventually Miss Harlow talked to the police. She was not called as a witness at the inquest, however, which was a very unusual omission. The questions asked of others who did testify at the coroner's inquiry were often less than searching.

The story that emerged, at that point, was this:

Bern had sent his wife over to stay with her mother, who was alone, on Saturday night. On Sunday she returned to Benedict Canyon to share a "pickup dinner" with Bern, and then he sent her back to the Bello home, telling her he'd be along later after he finished reading some scenarios. When he didn't show up she thought nothing of it, assuming that he hadn't been able to get his work done.

The motive for the "suicide"?

The official suggestion was that Bern had been suffering from a physical infirmity that would have made a normal married life impossible. Less discreet sources put a name on the infirmity: impotence.

The fact that a man suffering from such a condition would

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not be likely to marry any woman, least of all a woman like Jean Harlow, was ignored by officialdom.

And then came the disclosure that Paul Bern had lived, in an apparently normal way, with another woman for many years. And the day after Bern's body was found, that woman, too, died under mysterious circumstances.

Dorothy Millette was an exquisite blonde who was struggling to become an actress when Bern met her. They lived together as man and wife in New York and Toronto for many years. She always used the name of Mrs. Paul Bern.

Then she fell victim to mental illness. It was necessary for her to enter a hospital. Paul paid all her expenses and visited her regularly for years. The love affair died during that time, but his real fondness for her continued. For the rest of her life he supported her.

When Dorothy was able to leave the sanitarium, she moved into a room at the Algonquin Hotel in Manhattan. There she lived quietly, reading a great deal and winning the admiration and respect of everyone on the staff. Bern saw her whenever he was in New York; the feeling between them was obviously warm and deep. In a 1920 will he left his estate to her. (That will was superseded, at his death, by a later testament leaving everything to Jean Harlow.)

In March, 1932 Bern wrote a letter to his onetime mistress that showed, better than anything else, the relationship between them. In it he said:

"Dear Dorothy:

I was very happy to get your letter of March 17.

I have been desperately trying to get away from here for both vacation and change of scene for the last year, but so far it has been quite impossible.

I read with great interest that you are contemplating a trip to San Francisco. Of course, I cannot give you any advice because you yourself can be the only person to know what is best. If you do go I hope that it will be a happy change.

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I understand that the Plaza Hotel is a fairly reasonable and attractive one.

If you do change to any other place we will find some way of supplying you with funds in a manner convenient for you.

My love and best wishes always,

Paul

P.S. The Clift Hotel is, I belive, quite fashionable and not very expensive."

In May Bern's secretary sent a letter to Dorothy at the Plaza Hotel in San Francisco. It said:

"Dear Miss Millette:

According to the arrangements agreed upon, I am enclosing a mony order for $160, due on May 14.

Mr. Bern has already left on his vacation, but I am at the office in the meantime, and if I can help you in any way at any time please don't hesitate to ask me.

I hope you are comfortably and happily settled in your new home.

Sincerely yours,
Irene Harrison,
Secretary to Mr. Bern."

Jean Harlow's stepfather, Marino Bello, said she had known nothing about the "other woman," but this was contradicted by Paul's brother, Henry Bern, who said that everyone had known about Miss Millette and that Paul had specifically discussed Miss Millette with Miss Harlow.

On September 6, the day after Bern died, Dorothy checked out of the Plaza Hotel and boarded the Sacramento River boat *Delta King*. At 4:45 a.m. the deck officer found a woman's coat and shoes beside the railing. Miss Millette was not aboard when the boat arrived at Sacramento. Two weeks later her body was found in the river.

Less than a week later, Jean Harlow returned to work on *Red Dust*, with Clark Gable.

Exactly a year later, in September, 1933, Jean eloped to Yuma, Arizona, and was married to Harold G. Rosson, a

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$1,200-a-week M-G-M cameraman, by a justice of the peace. They separated less than eight months later.

The Bern case seemed far in the past.

Then, in 1934, a new grand jury, investigating District Attorney Buron Fitts, obtained the records of the grand jury that had looked into Bern's death. The new grand jury said it was only interested in Fitts' expenditures for the grand jury.

But Fitts took the offensive, releasing some of the testimony before the 1932 grand jury. The most important revelations were in the testimony of Davis, the gardener, and Miss Harrison, the secretary.

"I think it was murder," said Davis. "I thought so from the beginning."

He said Carmichael, the butler, had "lied" about the tragedy. "He said they did not have a fuss the night before Bern's death. He said they got along fine. He said he had never heard anything about turning the place over to Bern's mother, when he had.

"He said Bern and Miss Harlow were hugging and kissing all the time, and Bern was talking of committing suicide, when really they didn't do much hugging and kissing, and Bern never did say anything about committing suicide."

Miss Harrison said that Jean Harlow had been the suitor, not Bern, during the courtship that preceded their marriage, and that Bern "didn't look particularly happy at the reception" that followed the ceremony.

A question that led to all sorts of interesting speculation had been asked of Garrison, the chauffeur:

"Did you hear about the time Mr. Bern found his wife in the hotel here?"

Garrison swore he hadn't. He also said no when asked if he had "ever seen Miss Harlow out with anyone but Bern."

Davis said the supposed suicide note was not in Bern's handwriting.

But the most sensational testimony given to the first grand jury was that a strange woman who avoided the servants had spent a good deal of time with Bern on that Sunday evening, his last night alive. Winifred Carmichael, the cook, reluctantly

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told of hearing a woman's voice, which was unfamiliar to her, in the house. The woman screamed once. Later Mrs. Carmichael found a woman's swim suit, wet, on the edge of Bern's private swimming pool. On a table nearby were two empty glasses.

The following morning, according to Davis, the gardener, there was broken glass and a small puddle of blood near Bern's favorite chair by the swimming pool.

Davis had told all this to the police, who made no move to follow up these promising leads. But after the gardener was questioned by the police, he was summoned by telephone to the Bello home. There, Davis said, Jean Harlow's stepfather said to him, "You are talking too much. Move your wife and family over to the garage and keep your damned mouth shut."

Bern had not liked Bello, according to Davis, "and Bello did not like Bern."

A further mystery was introduced into the case when it was later learned that Miss Harlow had made a secret visit to San Francisco a few days before Bern's death.

Had she kept a rendezvous there with Dorothy Millette?

She insisted that she had not seen Dorothy. Nevertheless, the rumors grew. As Bosley Crowther recalled in his superb biography of Louis B. Mayer, *Hollywood Rajah*, "There were those who had strong suspicions that [Miss Harlow] had been involved in a plot of some sort against her husband with his former common-law wife!"

For a time M-G-M feared "a threatened indictment of Miss Harlow on a murder charge." But studio boss Mayer, exerting all of his great political influence behind the scenes, was able to ward off that threat.

Officially, the Bern death was still a suicide.

During the next three years Miss Harlow's favorite escort was actor, William Powell, who appeared to be deeply in love with her.

In 1936 Jean's health began to deteriorate. She suffered such a severe sunburn that she was forced to postpone work for several weeks and undergo special medical treatment. Then came a serious throat infection. Weakened by these illnesses,

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she fell prey to influenza that winter. As winter waned and spring began, she was on the sick list a large part of the time with bad colds. Then her gall bladder became inflamed. Uremic poisoning developed.

After a week in Good Samaritan Hospital, Jean Harlow—with her mother, stepfather, a cousin, and Powell at her bedside—died of a cerebral edema. She was twenty-six.

Twenty-three years later there was another brief flurry of interest in the case. Screenwriter Ben Hecht, in the November, 1960 issue of *Playboy* magazine, wrote, "Paul Bern, remembered for having committed suicide as the impotent bridegroom of Jean Harlow, the great cinema sexpot, did no such thing. His suicide note, hinting that he was sexually incompetent and had therefore 'ended the comedy,' was a forgery. Studio officials decided, sitting in a conference around his dead body, that it was better to have Paul dead as a suicide than as the murder victim of another woman. It would be less a black eye for their biggest movie-making heroine, La Belle Harlow. It might crimp her box-office allure to have her blazoned as a wife who couldn't hold her husband."

The Los Angeles district attorney got in touch with Hecht, who told him that director Henry Hathaway had told him about the tragedy. But Hathaway, who was living in Nyack, New York, by then, said he had no first-hand knowledge of the case. As far as he knew, the suicide note was not a forgery.

And there the mystery remains.

If Bern really did kill himself, the Hollywood big shots who suppressed (and possibly faked) evidence, threw political influence in the way of a real police investigation, and otherwise did their best to hide the facts were guilty of incredible stupidity. The suicide of Jean Harlow's husband wouldn't necessarily have reflected on her attractiveness as a woman.

These considerations lend weight to the suspicion that Bern was murdered, and that the studio bosses knew it and faked the evidence to hide the crime.

But if he was murdered, who murdered him?

Dorothy Millette? Perhaps. She had written something on a pad in her hotel room. Only one word could be identified

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from the impressions on the paper underneath. The word was "justification." It isn't difficult to build a whole murder theory around that word and Dorothy's past history. Had she been so shattered by Bern's marriage that she had immediately begun to make plans to kill him?

But if Dorothy Millette had killed Bern in Los Angeles on Sunday night, why did she bother to go back to the hotel in San Francisco, pack her things, check out, board the river boat, and then—after all that—commit suicide? Wouldn't she have been more likely to kill herself right after she killed Bern?

The only answer to that question is that she was irrational. It is not a very satisfactory answer.

Did Jean Harlow have a secret meeting with Dorothy Millette in San Francisco a few days before Bern's death? If the answer to that question is yes, then this whole fantastic case becomes wilder than Hollywood's most absurd thrillers.

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V — Thelma Todd: *The Wrong Time for Death*

IT'S INTERESTING to conjecture what might have become of Thelma Todd if she had not gone into motion pictures. The daughter of a Lawrence, Massachusetts politician named John Shaw Todd, she grew up to be a beautiful blonde with the kind of figure that dazed men. As a teenager she won a beauty contest that earned her the title of "Miss Massachusetts." She had decided to be a school teacher, and she earned some of her tuition at normal school by working as a fashion model.

One can picture her becoming a teacher, marrying a promising young local man after a few years, and becoming the vivacious, party-loving life of the country club, hated by all the other women and secretly desired by all the men.

Instead, her life was changed by a local theater manager who knew her father. The theater man sent the girl's photograph to Jesse Lasky, with a letter urging that producer to give her a job. Lasky decided to enter her in the first class of a school for young actors that he had persuaded his studio, Paramount, to establish at its eastern studios at Astoria, Queens.

Lasky's letter arrived at the Todd house shortly after Thelma began her first term as a sixth grade teacher. She threw up the job at once and headed for New York City. For six months she and twenty-three other young men and women studied dramatics, make-up, costuming, etiquette, riding, fencing, dancing, swimming, auto driving. On March 2, 1926, a graduation dinner was held at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel, and Thelma and fifteen others who had shown promise got one-year contracts with options. The sixteen youngsters appeared in a film, *Fascinating Youth*, which had parts written especially for

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each of them; it did fairly well. Only one other actor trained in the short-lived school ever really became a big Hollywood name; that was Charles (Buddy) Rogers, who eventually married Mary Pickford.

Thelma Todd appeared in a number of silent films and was one of those actresses who successfully made the transition from silents to talkies. She was the all-round actress; she appeared in Westerns, comedies, musicals, mysteries, melodramas, and serious drama. Her forte was comedy, however, as she showed in assignments with the Marx Brothers and with Laurel and Hardy. She appeared as a comedy team with Patsy Kelly in a series of remarkably funny two-reelers. By the time of her death, when she was a mere thirty years old, she had made more than seventy movies.

She was a healthy, happy-looking girl, full of bouncing vitality. But like many girls of her type, she concealed a heart that was Gothic. Occasionally her close friends would catch a momentary glimpse of that inner self, full of brooding doubts, gloom, and unhappiness. "Life isn't worth the candle," she once muttered to a friend. "While we're here we should laugh, be gay, and have fun."

Thelma Todd laughed, was gay, had fun. She acquired a reputation for practical jokes without malice. She was a fixture at parties. Her love affairs were many and often casual.

In July, 1932, Thelma eloped to Prescott, Arizona, with Pasquale (Pat) Di Cicco, an actor's agent. Later they dropped in on a minister in Los Angeles and renewed their vows before him. But neither the civil nor the religious bonds held; on March 3, 1934, Miss Todd obtained a divorce from Di Cicco, charging cruelty and incompatibility.

By now she was beginning to think of the future. She had lasted eight years in Hollywood, and she knew that most stars had a fairly short career. She didn't want to end up destitute. So she invested some of her money in a beach restaurant on the coast highway north of Santa Monica. Her partner in the venture was Roland West, a former director. She and West maintained separate apartments on the second floor over the restaurant; apparently the relationship was purely business. West also had a bungalow high on the hill above the restau-

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rant, and attached to the bungalow was a two-car garage where Thelma kept her car.

The restaurant was profitable, and the money kept rolling in from the Todd pictures, as she continued as much in demand for new roles as ever. But life was becoming complicated for Thelma Todd. She became a target for extortion threats, and at least one man was arrested for trying to shake her down. It was rumored that blackmailers were plaguing her, too. And she sometimes would ask her chauffeur to drive faster because she was afraid some "gangsters" might try to kidnap her. What all this meant, nobody seemed to know after her death—or if they knew, they weren't going to say.

Early in December, 1935 Stanley Lupino, the comedian, and his daughter, Ida, who would later be recognized as one of the greatest talents in Hollywood, decided to give a party in honor of Thelma. It was to be held at the Trocadero restaurant. A few days before the party, Ida Lupino chanced to meet Di Cicco, who asked why she hadn't invited him to the party.

"I thought it might be embarrassing for you and Thelma," Miss Lupino said.

"I'd like to come," Di Cicco told her. So she invited him to come.

On the night of the party, a seat was left vacant beside Thelma for Di Cicco. But when he arrived at the restaurant, an actress on his arm, the two went to a table in another part of the restaurant.

"He and Thelma spoke," Miss Lupino said later, "but she was very indignant. She berated him bitterly for slighting me and herself."

It was, according to one witness, "a terrific argument."

A few hours later Thelma Todd left the party, apparently in a gay mood. Before she got into her limousine, in front of the Troc, she turned, made an exaggerated wave of salute to her friends, and cried out with mock solemnity, "Goodbye!"

Later her friends were to wonder whether she had been more serious than they imagined at that moment.

As Miss Todd was driven home in a rented car, she again asked the driver, Ernest O. Peters, to drive faster because she was afraid she might be slain or kidnaped by gangsters.

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Sometime about 4 a.m.—give or take a half hour—Peters brought the car to a stop in front of Miss Todd's restaurant. It was his custom to see her to the top of the stairs to her apartment, but on this night she told him that it wouldn't be necessary. She was still on the sidewalk when he drove off. It was then early Sunday morning.

She was never seen alive again.

On Monday morning Thelma Todd's maid reported for work. Puzzled at not finding her mistress in the apartment, she looked up the hill and noticed one of the doors of the garage partly open. So she wearily climbed the 270 steps to the garage, pushed the door open, and went to Miss Todd's car.

She found Thelma slumped in the driver's seat, with blood on her face. There was blood on the seat and on the running-board of the car, too. But Miss Todd was still wearing her evening gown and fur jacket, and they had not been torn or otherwise disturbed. And her hands—and long finger nails—bore no sign of a struggle.

When the police arrived, shortly after 10:30 that morning, they set to work with a will. But almost immediately the power of the motion picture industry was brought to bear, as it always has been in Hollywood scandals.

To the first police on the case, to Thelma's mother, to many of the grand jurors, and to most of the correspondents, it looked like murder. But before the next few hours and days were out, the police were calling it suicide, Mrs. Todd was calling it an accident, and it was obvious that a real murder investigation—with its inevitable airing of dirty linen—would not be permitted.

So from this point on, we cannot speak of *facts* as such. All we can say is that these were officially reported to be facts.

The autopsy showed that carbon monoxide poisoning—from the auto exhaust—was the cause of death. The face was bruised, but the police insisted that she had banged it against the steering wheel when she collapsed. Those who regarded the death as murder pointed out that someone could have struck her in the face, then placed her unconscious body in the car and started the motor—and all the evidence was consistent with such a theory.

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The accident theory was based on the assumption that Miss Todd had forgotten to take the key to her apartment. Finding herself locked out in the pre-dawn chill, she had climbed the hill to the garage, had rested in the car, and had turned on the motor to keep warm. But her evening slippers were not scuffed, and in a test climb of the same stone steps it was found that such slippers would be badly scuffed.

That meant that Thelma had not walked to the garage—she had driven there. But how could that be, when Peters had deposited her on the sidewalk far below?

Then it became apparent that all of the assumptions about the case were wrong in one of their basic premises. Thelma Todd had not died early Sunday morning—she had died late Sunday night or early *Monday* morning!

There seemed to be no doubt about it. The autopsy disclosed food that Miss Todd had eaten somewhere, some time after the Troc party. Mrs. Wallace Ford said she'd had a telephone call from Thelma at 4 p.m. Sunday to say she'd be at Mrs. Ford's cocktail party that afternoon, and "when you see who's coming with me, you'll drop dead!" (Miss Todd, of course, did not attend the party.) A druggist and one of his customers, told of seeing a blonde in evening gown and fur jacket, whom they identified positively as Thelma Todd, make a telephone call from a booth in the drugstore about the time Mrs. Ford got her call. At 11 p.m. Sunday, less than twelve hours before Miss Todd's body was found, a woman answering her description went into a tobacco shop and asked the proprietor to make a phone call to a number that ended in "7771." Before he could make the call, however, she ran out and went down the street to meet a man who was holding a woman's fur jacket.

And it was about that time Sunday night that Jewel Carmen—the estranged wife of Thelma Todd's partner, West—passed a car containing Miss Todd and a man she didn't recognize. Miss Carmen, a former silent movie actress, knew Miss Todd very well; there was no question about her identification.

All of the new witnesses identified the strange man as "dark and foreign-looking." He was never found.

The investigation turned to Thelma's love life. She had told

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her friends about a new man in her life who couldn't attend the party at the Troc because he was in San Francisco, but she had not named the man. There was Di Cicco, who had been her husband; he insisted that everything had been pleasant between them, and he didn't mention the row at the Troc. There were other men.

During the Lupino party, Miss Todd had gone over to a table in the night club where theater owner Sid Grauman was sitting with three other men. When she returned to her party, she seemed downcast. The reason was never satisfactorily explained.

In the end, the coroner's jury decided the death was probably accidental, and so did Thelma's mother.

Deputy District Attorney George Johnson didn't agree. "It seems too difficult to believe Miss Todd went to that garage and started the motor of her car to keep warm," he said. He thought it was suicide, despite the absence of note or known motive.

But Patsy Kelly, one of Thelma's closest friends, asserted, "Thelma would not kill herself. She had every reason to live, none to die." And the grand jury foreman grumbled, "It looks as if they're trying to build up this case as a suicide, but in the actual evidence, I have found nothing to support this theory definitely."

Miss Todd's lawyer said flatly that he thought she'd been murdered.

Nearly three months later a middle-aged, well-dressed, black-haired woman sent a telegram from Ogden, Utah, to the Los Angeles Police Department. She said the man who "killed Thelma Todd" was in Ogden. The telegram gave his name and that of the Ogden hotel in which he had been living since January—that is, since immediately after the death.

The Los Angeles police did not make the telegram public, but the Ogden police, who were obviously on their toes, found out about the telegram and the woman, and conducted a quiet investigation. Then the mayor, Harmon Peery, and Police Chief Rial Moore notified the Los Angeles cops of their

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findings. "Someone should question the man who has been located," the mayor said.

But nobody did. The Los Angeles cops sent word to Ogden that the Todd case was closed. As far as they were concerned, it was suicide.

Hollywood's secrets once again had been protected.

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VI — Errol Flynn:
The Moon Through a Porthole

THERE WERE always girls in Errol Flynn's life; lots of girls. And he liked 'em young, which was unfortunate. Because one girl met him at a party, and another girl went for a sail on his yacht, and then both of them cried, *Rape!*

And so a phrase was born·

"I'm in like Flynn."

He was the son of a marine biologist who settled in Tasmania after the baby was born there. They christened him Errol Leslie Thomson Flynn. As a boy he was stuck in a boarding school in London and all but forgotten—or so he felt—by his family. He rebelled against all authority; the school expelled him. Then another school expelled him. Next came a school in Australia. Then a period knocking about the South Sea Islands. . . . All manner of odd bits, until finally he made his way to London, spent a year and a half with a repertory group. After that, a small part in a quickie film, *Murder at Monte Carlo*, produced by Warner Brothers as a quickie in England. Jack Warner spotted the handsome, debonair young Irishman in the movie and offered him a six-month contract at one hundred and fifty dollars a week.

Almost immediately, Flynn became a star, to many moviegoers the greatest swashbuckler of them all—especially as *Captain Blood.*

He became famous as a man-about-Hollywood, a bon vivant, a connoisseur of fine woman-flesh, a man who violated the biblical injunction against looking upon the wine when it is red—who violated a good many other biblical injunctions too.

And then, one night late in 1942, two plainclothesmen

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called on Errol Flynn and told him, "We have a very serious charge against you."

They told him the story: a girl named Betty Hansen had come from Nebraska to visit her sister in Los Angeles. In due course she was missing and the cops were asked to look for her; she hadn't been home for a few days. Betty was found in a hotel in Santa Monica. The police took her in, began questioning her. She began to tell them about her adventures, which turned out to be mainly sexual. One of the men she named was Errol Flynn. To back up her story, she also produced his unlisted telephone number.

At this point, the cops might have been expected to call the District Attorney's office, which would then have put in a quick telephone call to the appropriate executives in the motion picture industry, and the usual cover-up would have taken place. But there was a new D.A. in office . . .

And so Flynn was made the scapegoat.

Betty Hansen, who claimed to be seventeen—below the age of consent—was taken before a grand jury, but that body, after questioning her, indicated how much weight it put in her testimony by refusing to indict Flynn. Normally, that would have been the end of the matter.

But not this time. The D.A.'s men kept trying to find something to bolster the case against Flynn. They found that a woman named Satterlee had complained to the sheriff's office about Flynn a year earlier. Mrs. Satterlee had asserted that Flynn had seduced her fifteen-year-old daughter, Peggy, aboard his yacht. The sheriff's men had looked into the charge but decided there was no case.

Now the D.A.'s office picked it up, dusted it off, and lumped it with the Hansen charge in a single District Attorney's complaint charging four counts of statutory rape.

Errol Flynn, the great screen lover, faced the prospect of at least five years in prison for being too loving off screen.

Flynn's lawyer, Robert Ford, put in an SOS for that great criminal lawyer, Jerry Giesler. He quickly ascertained the essential allegations regarding each girl:

Peggy Satterlee had accepted Flynn's invitation to go for a

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weekend sail aboard his yacht, the *Sirocco*, off Catalina Island, at the beginning of August, 1941. They were not alone. Others aboard were Buster Wiles, a friend of Flynn; another girl; Peter Stackpole, the magazine photographer; and a crew of three. Flynn allegedly had intercourse with her twice: once early Sunday morning after returning to the yacht from spending Saturday evening ashore, and again Sunday night, as the yacht was nearing port. She had not complained to anyone aboard the yacht, and no one had been aware of the dastardly deed. She had even posed, smiling, for photographs with Flynn. The photos showed no scratches or bruises on either of them.

Betty Hansen had attended a party toward the end of September, 1942 with a new-found friend. The party was held in the Bel Air mansion owned by Colleen Moore, silent screen star, and rented by three bachelors, Bruce Cabot, Freddie McEvoy, and Stephen Raphael. Betty was introduced to Flynn and sat on his lap in the den. Then she stayed to dinner, along with some of the other guests. After dinner, Flynn took her upstairs to a bedroom, she said, stripped her, took off his own clothes, and had intercourse with her.

World-shaking events were happening in the world at that time. The Allies landed a huge army in French North Africa, German troops entered Unoccupied France, the Russians began their great counter-offensive at Stalingrad which would, within two months, result in the surrender of an entire German army, and Admiral Darlan, Vichy Chief of State in North Africa, was assassinated.

But the Errol Flynn rape case was the banner headline on most American newspapers almost every day.

At the preliminary hearing, Betty Hansen was questioned by Deputy District Attorney Thomas W. Cochran. He led the girl up to the events that followed the dinner:

Q. Did you go any place with Mr. Flynn?

A. Yes.

Q. Where did you go?

A. Upstairs.

Q. Just before you went upstairs do you recall anything that was said by yourself or Mr. Flynn?

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A. I don't recall what was said, but I know something was said.

Q. By whom?

A. Flynn.

Q. What is your best recollection, if you have any recollection, as to what he did say to you?

A. I do not know the words, but that he was going to take me upstairs and lie me on the bed for a nap. . . .

Q. And when you got upstairs, where did you go?

A. The bedroom.

Q. Do you recall whether or not the door was locked or unlocked?

A. Locked.

Q. I mean before you got in?

A. It was unlocked.

Q. Was the door—did the door remain unlocked before you got in, or was some change made in it?

A. It was unlocked when we went in.

Q. After you got in?

A. It was unlocked.

Q. Was the door subsequently locked?

A. Yes.

Q. By whom?

A. Errol Flynn.

Q. All right now, after you got into this room, was anything said by Mr. Flynn to you or by you to Mr. Flynn?

A. Yes.

Q. Relate the conversation in full that you can now remember.

A. I believe he told me to lie down. . . .

Q. Tell the court what transpired from that time on, and what was said. Just go ahead, and relate what was done and said.

A. Well, Flynn took me in there and sat me down.

Q. Where?

A. On the twin bed, the first one.

Q. All right.

A. And I believe he told me to lie down, and I told him I did not want to take a nap, I could go back downstairs, and I

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do not know what he said or anything. He went out and locked the door and came back.

Q. Went and locked the door?

A. Yes.

Q. All right. Then what happened.

A. I had an act of intercourse.

Q. Before you had this act of intercourse, was anything done about your clothing or his?

A. Yes.

Q. Tell the court what was done in that respect.

A. He undressed me and then he got undressed.

Q. How were you dressed on that occasion?

A. I had slacks on.

Q. What else?

A. That is all.

Q. Did you have on panties?

A. Yes.

Q. When you say he undressed you, what of your clothing did he take off?

A. All of them.

Q. And of his clothing, what was taken off?

A. Everything except his shoes, I believe.

(Flynn's film, *They Died with Their Boots On*, had just been released. The testimony lent itself to all manner of bawdy jokes in every saloon in the country.)

On cross-examination, Giesler forced Betty to admit that she had gone to the party hoping to meet Flynn and that the fellow who took her there had told her to play up to Flynn in the hope he might help her get a job in motion pictures.

Then Giesler went on with his questioning:

Q. And in talking about playing up to Flynn, did he say anything about intercourse?

A. No, he did not.

Q. He did not mention intercourse at any time?

A. No, he did not.

Q. Now, then, for the purpose of refreshing your recollection, Miss Hansen, I will ask you, do you recall, do you remember your testimony you gave before the grand jury up on the fifth floor, or down on the fifth floor, of this building?

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A. Yes.

Q. That was some little time ago?

A. Yes.

Q. I show you your testimony. . . . We are talking about rmand Knapp. That is the same young man?

A. Yes.

Q. [*reading*] *"Did he say anthing to you about going* o introduce you to Errol Flynn? A. He said how I should act nd play up to him. Q. Tell us about that. A. He said play up o him and drink with him and he even said to have inter- ourse with him." Do you remember so testifying? This is our—

A. No, I don't. . . .

Q. [*reading*] "Did Mr. Knapp tell you to have intercourse vith Flynn? A. He said to be sociable and do anything he sked me to do." That is true?

A. Yes.

Later Giesler also brought the admission from Betty that he had told officers at the Juvenile Hall "that I undressed nyself," contrary to her latest version.

A good deal of the Hansen testimony was wonderful fun. Giesler asked Betty:

"When he told you to lie down on the bed, did he tell you what he wanted you to lie down for?"

"No, he did not," she replied.

"Did you have any thoughts of what he wanted you to lie down for?"

"No," she said, wide-eyed and innocent.

Then Giesler developed the fact that Betty had been surely one of the most cooperative rape victims on record, despite her assertions that she had resisted Flynn's blandishments.

Q. I believe you said you had some sport shirt?

A. Yes.

Q. Did that button or zip?

A. Buttoned.

Q. Did you help him on that?

A. I helped him.

Q. You did not know then what was going to happen?

A. No, I did not know exactly.

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Q. What did you think was going to happen—just going to take a nap?

A. Yes.

Q. That is what you thought, and you were made more comfortable so that you could take a nap better?

A. Yes.

Q. And then you had on, I believe—in answer to Mr. Cochran's question I believe you used the word panties—you had some panties on?

A. Yes.

Q. How did they fasten, pull or zip? I do not know how they do. . . .

A. Just slip them on.

Q. You don't pull or zip?

A. No, they don't. . . .

Q. Did they have elastic band or not?

A. Yes.

Q. Were they tight around your waist?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you help take them off?

A. Not that I recall.

Q. May you have had to help take them off?

A. I might have.

Q. Did you still not know what was going to happen?

A. Maybe he took my clothes off to go to bed. Don't you take your clothes off to go to bed?

Q. Maybe I do. That is what you thought you went up there for?

A. Yes.

Q. When did you come to the conclusion that something was going to happen?

A. When he went and locked the door.

Q. Your clothes were all off when he went to lock the door?

A. I believe they were.

Afterwards, she conceded, they got dressed and went downstairs, where Flynn kissed her and "I kissed him back, I mean just one smack" before he left the house.

Peggy Satterlee said she was lying in her bunk aboard the

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Sirocco, wearing only her slip in lieu of a nightgown, plus a pair of panties, when Flynn walked into her cabin.

"I said, 'You should not be here,' " she testified, "and he said, 'I just want to talk to you,' and I said, 'You should not be here, because it is not nice to come in a lady's bedroom when she is in bed.' "

Flynn pleaded with her to let him get in bed with her—"I just want to talk to you"—but she told him not "to bother a nice girl," Peggy said. That apparently annoyed him, because he then told her, according to her testimony, "I wanted to be nice to you, but you asked for it, so you will get it."

And with that "he just walked over to the bed, pulled down the covers and pulled up my slip and pulled down my pants."

And then the villain possessed her.

Then came that part of Peggy's story that became most famous, the subject of more ribald amusement than any other part of what was to be a highly entertaining trial. This was the "moon through the porthole" incident.

Peggy said she was standing on the deck, commenting on the beauty of the moonlight, with Flynn.

Q. You referred to the moon, and he said it looked better from the porthole, did he?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Did he carry you downstairs?

A. No, sir.

Q. Did he pull you downstairs?

A. No, sir.

Q. Did he then take hold of your arm and lead you downstairs?

A. He might have taken hold of my arm on the way down the steps, but I do not remember that he pulled me. . . .

Q. And you went in?

A. Into Mr. Wiles' room. . . .

Q. Why?

A. Because I wanted to see the moon through the porthole.

Peggy said the moon was on "the right side" of the boat. As she looked through the porthole, she said, Flynn told her that since he'd enjoyed her once, there was no reason why he

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shouldn't partake again. She objected and tried to leave, but whenever she got up he pushed her back down on the bunk. She specifically said that she did not jump up on the bunk herself and that Flynn did not lift her up. These were to be important points.

Peggy told how she struggled on the bunk, trying to prevent Flynn from carrying out his naughty plans. She said she was on her side, wriggling about constantly, kicking her feet, fighting.

"And yet he completed the act?" Giesler asked with mild wonderment.

Peggy got flustered. She obviously had the same mental picture that was in every other mind in the courtroom. She asked permission to amplify her story.

"After I fought for a long time," she recalled, "he said, 'If you relax I won't hurt you,' and then I did."

The trial began early in January 1943 in the Superior Court of Los Angeles County. Betty Hansen was the first complaining witness to take the stand. She immediately added to Flynn's reputation for virility by declaring that the act of rape had taken "about fifty minutes."

Even Giesler was awed.

"And during the entire time he was on top of you?" he asked.

"That is right," she said.

Then Giesler forced Betty to admit that before the incident at the Bel Air house, she had been caught engaging in what Giesler called "some rather unusual sexual practices," which she had confessed before the grand jury. He pointed out that she was subject to a possible four-year sentence of imprisoment for her illicit sex acts. There was a clear implication that she would testify to anything the D.A. wanted in return for a promise of leniency.

The same applied to Peggy Satterlee. She had confessed in court that she had submitted to an abortion (it had no relation to the Flynn case).

Peggy took the witness stand looking like a very young girl. Her hair was in pigtails, and she was wearing a demure dress with a Peter Pan collar, bobby sox, and flat-heeled shoes. She

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looked like everybody's kid sister, instead of the night club dancer she really was.

When Giesler began his cross-examination of her, he held a photograph in his hand.

"Miss Satterlee," he said, "I am a little bit mystified. I have here a picture. Is this you?"

He handed her the picture. She looked at it and handed it back.

"Yes," she said.

"Tsk, tsk," he said mildly. But he made no move to show the picture to the judge, the jury, or anyone else—in fact, he never did show them the picture. "What a difference! Tell me, do you always dress like this?"

"Like what?" she demanded.

"In bobby sox and pigtails?"

"Sometimes, if I feel like it."

"That's all," he said.

The jury clearly got the point.

During the trial, an anonymous tipster on the telephone told Giesler that an attendant in a certain funeral parlor could give him some interesting information about Peggy Satterlee. At the funeral parlor Giesler learned that Peggy had visited the mortuary with a boy friend, Owen Cathcart-Jones, a flier. She had danced about the cold room, pulling up the sheets and peering under them at the nude bodies.

But how could Giesler get this information, which would bear heavily on Peggy's sexual peculiarities and her credibility as a witness, before the jury? He could not call Cathcart-Jones. Somehow he had to induce the prosecution to put the flier on the stand.

So the wily Giesler kept throwing the name of the flier into the cross-examination, as though there was some mysterious connection between Peggy and Cathcart-Jones. This led to one of the most hilarious bits of unintentional courtroom humor, when Giesler asked Peggy if the flier had any pet names for her.

A. Rather silly names, but Scrumpet, Bitchy Pie, and so forth.

Q. Scrumpet, Bitchy Pie, and so forth?

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A. Scrumpet.

Q. Did you say scrumpet or strumpet?

A. Scrumpet or something. It is an English name for crumpet or . . .

Q. Well?

A. I know it was something.

Q. You know it sounded something like Scrumpet?

A. Yes, sir.

THE JUDGE: I understood her to say Strumpet.

COCHRAN: No, it is a little cake, I think.

The prosecutor thought he saw through Giesler's plan. So he decided he wouldn't let the jurors get the idea that there was anything sinister between Cathcart-Jones and Peggy. So he called Cathcart-Jones as a witness.

And Giesler pounced.

On the cross-examination, Giesler asked Cathcart-Jones about the funeral home.

Q. You also were with her down to a mortuary down here in Los Angeles, were you not?

A. Yes.

Q. And she was kind of playing hide-and-seek around the corpses, wasn't she? Do you remember that night?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you remember she showed you—opened it up and showed you—the body of an elderly lady?

A. Yes.

Q. And pulled the sheet down in the mortuary on a Filipino who had been crippled across his center?

A. Yes, I remember that.

Q. And then went back to where they inject the veins of corpses and there opened and looked down at an elderly man lying there, and her head was pushed down against the man's face. Do you remember that?

A. Yes, I remember that.

That gamy testimony really shook the jury, which was composed of nine women and three men.

Peggy was utterly destroyed by Giesler's defense witnesses, a harbormaster and two sea captains, who demonstrated that

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Peggy could not have seen the moon when and where she said she did. It was on the other side of the yacht.

Flynn acquitted himself well on the witness stand, denying everything in a persuasive, believable manner, answering all questions in a crisp, straight-forward manner.

Once in a while the famous Flynn sense of humor showed through briefly. There was the time when Cochran recalled to Flynn the testimony of Peggy that she had drunk some milk with rum in it. Flynn said he didn't remember her drinking the concoction. "It just strikes me as a very peculiar thing to drink," he said blandly.

In his charge, the judge told the jurors, "You are not required to believe anything as jurors that you would not believe in the ordinary walk of life."

The jurors decided they did not believe the girls. After deliberating for four hours, they acquitted Flynn on all counts.

Errol Flynn made many movies after that. The scandal didn't affect his popularity in the least.

Gradually, however, he began to show the effects of age and dissipation, and the bad times that fell upon Hollywood with the advent of television eventually left him without movie roles. He appeared in some foreign films to make enough money for his ex-wives, wrote the best Hollywood autobiography ever published, *My Wicked, Wicked Ways*, and got mixed up in a comic opera sort of way with Fidel Castro's very real revolution in Cuba.

He dedicated the book "to a small companion," who was Beverly Aadland. She had been fifteen when he first acquired her as his child love. Obviously, the statutory rape trial had tuaght Flynn nothing in the way of discretion.

In October, 1959 Flynn flew with Beverly to Vancouver, where he was making arrangements to sell his yacht—not the *Sirocco*, but its successor, the *Zaca*. At the airport Flynn told the Canadian reporters, "The rest of my life will be devoted to women and litigation."

Looking at Beverly, he winked and said, "I like young women because they give you a feeling of youth."

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A few days later he prepared to leave Vancouver. Before he left, a small, informal party was held for him. He was in high spirits, joking, telling wonderful, wild stories of Hollywood in its heyday, being the life of the party.

Suddenly, he asked his host, Dr. Grant Gould, if he might lie down for a moment in another room. "I feel sort of tired," Flynn said.

In a few moments, Flynn was dead.

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VII — Charlie Chaplin: *Blood Won't Tell*

CHARLES CHAPLIN lived through almost all of Hollywood's scandals, so he should have learned prudence. Fatty Arbuckle was his friend. So was Edna Purviance, who figured in the William Desmond Taylor murder mystery. And Wallace Reid. And many, many others.

But Chaplin apparently didn't learn a thing from the troubles of others. He didn't even learn from his own narrow escapes.

In 1918 he began squiring Mildred Harris around Hollywood. The trouble with that romance was that Mildred, a blue-eyed, shapely blonde, was only sixteen. But before he could get into legal difficulties because of her age, Chaplin married her. In 1920 Mildred divorced him.

In 1924 another young cutie came along. She was Lita Grey. She was only sixteen, too. She quickly became his "protege," inherited Miss Purviance's dressing room (Edna had once been Charlie's great passion, too), and was signed as the star of *The Gold Rush*—at seventy-five dollars a week. Charlie was a fool when it came to women, but not about money.

Eight months later, Chaplin had a visit from Lita's uncle, who happened to be an attorney. He pointed out to Charlie that she was below the age of consent, which meant that intimacies with her constituted statutory rape. Charlie got the point. On November 24, 1924 Charlie and Lita, flanked by their respective lawyers, were married in the dreary railroad town of Empalme, near Guaymas, Mexico. That afternoon the glum-faced groom went fishing—alone. When they got back to Hollywood, Charlie made another woman the star of *The Gold Rush*.

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Lita and Charlie didn't hit it off together. After they finally broke up, she filed a forty-two page divorce complaint against him on January 10, 1927. In it she charged that Chaplin had been intimate with her for several months before their marriage (while she was still under-age), that he had abnormal urges, that he had been mentally cruel to her, even to the extent of suggesting that she commit suicide, and that he was in love with another woman.

At once the guardians of the nation's morals hit the trail in full cry. And Chaplin gave them a legal basis for their hurrahing when he is alleged to have told reporters, "I married Lita Grey because I loved her and, like many other fool men, I loved her more when she wronged me and I am afraid I still love her. I was stunned and ready for suicide that day when she told me she didn't love me but that we must marry. Lita's mother often suggested to me that I marry Lita and I said I would love to if only we could have children. I thought I was incapable of fatherhood. Her mother deliberately and continuously put Lita in my path. She encouraged our relations."

That seemed a pretty clear-cut admission of premarital relations which could land Charlie in prison and on a boycott list. But the candor of his statement swayed many movie-goers. And the United States of 1927 was a good deal more sophisticated than the United States of 1922. Now it was obvious that relaxed standards were not unique to Hollywood, that every small town and big city in the country had been affected by the changes sweeping the country.

Charlie was able to ride out the storm. He was not prosecuted for whatever may have transpired between him and Lita before their marriage. His career remained intact.

But millions of Americans tucked the memory of that scandal away in the back of their minds. It would be brought forth again when a new and far worse scandal broke on Chaplin's head seventeen years later.

Charles Chaplin was born into dire poverty in London's Limehouse District on April 16, 1889. His parents were small-time vaudeville entertainers. His father died of alcoholism when Charlie was three. The mother, Hannah, made a

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valiant effort to care for Charlie and his brother, Sydney, who was four years older than he. She quit the theater and took sewing jobs to eke out a bare living for the family. But it wasn't enough; hunger was a familiar thing to them, and it was always hard to scrape up money for the rent on the bare little place in Kensington.

The struggle was too much for Mrs. Chaplin. She had a mental breakdown that put her into a hospital. The two small boys slept in parks, ate scraps, roamed the streets until finally they were caught and sent to a workhouse orphanage, as bad as anything in Dickens' novels.

Then the mother recovered, temporarily, at least. Charlie sold newspapers, barefooted, because shoes were more than he could afford. He opened carriage doors for a penny tip, ran errands, was lather boy in a barber shop.

He had discovered talents within himself. He could mimic, sing, dance, and clown in droll fashion. Soon there were small engagements in the English music halls. Then he became part of a big-time act, Karno's Comedians, which even had bookings in America.

It was in New York that Mack Sennett spotted him, lured him away from Karno's troupe to do just one film, and found he had a comic genius on his hands. Chaplin's starting salary in motion pictures was $150 a week; the first time he got an increase, they raised his salary to $1,250 a week.

Chaplin went on to become the greatest name in the American film art. His character, The Little Fellow—or the tramp, as most movie-goers thought of him, was enormously popular with audiences around the world, and yet philosophers and psychologists found endless subtle meaning in it. His great silent comedies are unequaled.

But with *The Great Dictator* Chaplin proved that he could do as well with sound. Indeed, he even composed the music for all his films, in addition to writing them, producing them, and directing them.

He became one of the richest men in Hollywood; at the same time, he acquired the reputation of being a tight man with a dollar. He never took out American citizenship, for reasons that have never been quite clear. But he did feel free

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to participate, in the manner of a dilettante, in politics, at least to the extent of endorsing Communist-front organizations. He had been sympathetic to radical causes, and to the Soviet Union, as long ago as the early 1920's, probably as a result of his bitter childhood experiences. Anti-Communists were hostile to him, the strongly nationalistic sentiments generated by World War II made his failure to become an American a suspect thing, and his wealth didn't endear him to most people.

In his pictures, Chaplin liked to give the lead to an unknown, whom he would build up as a star. Often, the star's career was short-lived, as with Myrna Kennedy, a girl barely out of school who was chosen for the feminine lead in *The Circus*, was lionized for one season, and then fell back into obscurity. Nobody to Celebrity to Nobody again: that seemed to be the pattern.

It was different with Paulette Goddard. Chaplin built her into a star and trained her, but she remained with him for years. He steadfastly refused to say whether they were married, although she lived with him in his house openly. Actually, they had been married on a ship at Canton, China, in 1936, but he thought that his marital affairs were nobody's business but his own. Most people, of course, assumed the worst, and this did not add to Chaplin's personal popularity nor to his reputation for morality.

In 1941, Paulette Goddard and Chaplin separated. She later got a Mexican divorce.

A bachelor again, Chaplin began having Sunday afternoon tea-and-crumpets parties in his big, baroque mansion on Summit Drive above Beverly Hills. At those gatherings one might meet Greta Garbo, John Garfield, John McCormack, David Niven, Katherine Hepburn, Ronald Colman, Errol Flynn, Gary Cooper. People felt quite free to bring guests, and to ask if friends might go to a Sunday afternoon at Chaplin's. In 1941, A. C. Blumenthal, the producer, sent a girl to Tim Durant, a Chaplin associate, with a letter of introduction explaining that he had met her in Mexico City.

The girl that Durant saw was a twenty-year-old redhead from Brooklyn who had been trying to break into movies for

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two years, although he was unaware of that fact. To him she looked like a pretty Irish stenographer. She was very demure when he saw her with her mother. And so he invited her to come out to Chaplin's house any Sunday afternoon for tea, crumpets, and good donversation.

The girl's name was Joan Barry. Chaplin is still paying off for the trouble he got into because of her.

In 1942 Joan Barry walked into Hedda Hopper's office. She said she was desperate. She said she thought she was pregnant; she was at the end of her rope.

The columnist took her to a doctor who confirmed the diagnosis. Joan said that the father was Chaplin.

In the weeks that followed, she tried to force her way into Chaplin's house on several occasions. When she realized that he was determined not to see her, she took an overdose of sleeping pills. The cops found her in time, pumped out her stomach, and booked her as a vagrant. Judge Charles J. Griffin, sitting in Beverly Hills Police Court, suspended sentence on condition that she leave town at once and for good. Chaplin gave a friend, Robert Arden, money to give Joan a ticket to New York and one hundred dollars. This was an act of generosity which was to boomerang. Police Captain W. W. White escorted Joan to the train.

Joan didn't go to New York. She got as far as Omaha, then left the train and caught the next one back to Los Angeles. She broke into Chaplin's home and, in desperation, he called the police. The judge gave her a ninety-day sentence. Chaplin sent his attorney to intercede for her. After she had spent five days in jail, he got her out of there and into a hospital in Santa Monica.

Chaplin's butler, who didn't like his boss—and subsequently testified against him—put in a discreet telephone call to Hedda Hopper. She got hold of her sidekick, Florabel Muir, Hollywood correspondent of *The New York Daily News* (which syndicates Miss Hopper's column), and the two succeeded in what Miss Hopper has called their "attempt at kidnaping." They hid Joan in Florabel Muir's own house.

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And then Joan Barry began to tell her story to the newspaper women—and the world.

She said she was pregnant. She said Charles Chaplin was the father.

She slapped him with a paternity suit. Pending trial of the case, he was ordered to pay one hundred dollars a week support, plus twenty-five hundred dollars immediately for her care, plus forty-six hundred dollars in installments for medical expenses.

A federal grand jury, intrigued by the newspaper accounts, summoned Joan Barry for questioning. It returned two indictments. One charged Charlie Chaplin with violation of the Mann Act, which outlaws the interstate transportation of women for immoral purposes. The other indictment accused him of having violated Joan's civil rights.

The Mann Act indictment was based on a trip that Joan had made to New York in the fall of 1942. Two weeks later Chaplin had gone to New York, too, to make a speech supporting a second front in Europe. They did not stay in the same hotel in New York, but Joan Barry said that one night she had gone with him to his suite in the Waldorf Towers, where they engaged in sexual intercourse. After they returned separately to Los Angeles, Chaplin again had relations with her, she said.

The civil rights indictment grew out of Joan's arrest—the arrest which ended with her being given one hundred dollars and a one-way ticket to New York. Indicted with Chaplin were the judge, Griffin; the police captain, White; Chaplin's friend, Arden; his associate, Durant; Police Lieutenant Claude Marple; and Police Matron Jessie Billie Reno. The penalty for this offense was a maximum of two years' imprisonment, a ten thousand dollar fine, or both. As it turned out, this indictment was eventually dropped.

But Chaplin was brought to trial on the Mann Act charge. Like Errol Glynn, he got Jerry Giesler to defend him.

There were seven women on the jury that tried Chaplin. The federal judge was J. F. T. O'Connor. The prosecutor was United States Attorney Charles H. Carr.

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On the eve of the trial, *The Los Angeles Times* outlined what Giesler's line of defense would be. It was an accurate report. The paper even put it in the kind of words that Giesler might use:

"Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, at this time it is my duty to outline my defendant's case. We hope to establish to your satisfaction that he is innocent of violating the Mann Act as set forth in regard to the young lady, Joan Barry. She came to Los Angeles in 1941, met Chaplin and began to go out socially. We will show that he interested her in pictures, that he believed a screen career was possible for her, and that following up that belief, he arranged a contract for her. Thereafter he provided for her dramatic lessons with Max Reinhardt. He also instructed her himself. We will show that her teeth were fixed at the expense of Chaplin Studios, that he bought a story for her, the purchase price of which was fifteen thousand dollars. Further, she received a bonus of one thousand dollars. In September, 1942 she was irked at the long delay in preparing her story for the screen and told Chaplin that she wanted to go to New York with her mother to live. Chaplin said, 'I have a lot of money invested in you.' She said, 'I am going anyway.' Mr. Chaplin said, 'All right, go. Arrangements will be made for your tickets.' It was all open and above board. The canceled checks which paid for her tickets will be produced."

"We will show that prior to October 1, 1942, she and her mother were occupying the same apartment in Beverly Hills and that she gave up the apartment and went to visit her aunt in New York City. She arrived there on October 5, moved into the Waldorf-Astoria, checking out of there on October 10. Mr. Chaplin did not arrive until October 15. Miss Barry checked in at another New York hotel which was owned by a man she knew and had seen in Mexico. She stayed there from October 10 until October 25. During that time she went out with the person who had checked her in. This person took her to the Stork Club. Mr. Chaplin happened to be there and saw her dancing with another man, but the two parties did not join."

"The sole occasion when she saw Mr. Chaplin in New York

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was that night at the Stork Club. On that occasion she did accompany him to the Waldorf Hotel but Mr. Chaplin will deny that there was any intimacy. We will show that she was willingly and gratuitously available to him to have relations at any time before her trip to New York, but at no time which involves the Mann Act charge against my client."

"Mr. Chaplin stayed in New York until October 27 and did not see Miss Barry again. He did not pay her bills at her other hotel nor did the Chaplin Studios."

"Briefly, it is the position of this defendant that he did not transport Joan Barry to New York for the purpose of having intimate relations. Nor did he insist upon her returning to Los Angeles for purposes of intimacy."

Key testimony, of course, was that of the alleged "victim" herself. She admitted that she had had two abortions before her present pregnancy.

She was asked if it wasn't true that on two occasions she had threatened to "put his name in the headlines" and to "make trouble for him"—threats that had amounted to blackmail. She denied it.

She did concede, however, that she had broken into Chaplin's house, had pointed a loaded gun at Chaplin for an hour and a half, had then gone to bed with him for sexual intercourse.

(Giesler later commented that he couldn't imagine anyone believing that Chaplin would send Joan to New York, keep her there in an expensive hotel suite, and pay her fare back to Los Angeles for immoral purposes when he could have her any time he wanted "for as little as twenty-five cents carfare.")

A writer was called as a witness, and he admitted that he'd gone out with Joan a good deal and that she'd visited him in his apartment.

Another witness, very reluctantly, was Jean Paul Getty, the oil billionaire, who is possibly the richest American. Giesler had referred repeatedly to a Tulsa oil millionaire who had befriended Joan. Finally he called Getty to the stand.

Under Giesler's questioning, Getty conceded that he was acquainted with Joan.

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"Early in 1941 did you see her frequently?" Giesler asked.

"Yes," Getty replied, after the judge overruled an objection by the prosecutor.

"Did you see her in Mexico City in March, 1941?"

This time the judge sustained the prosecutor's objection.

"Did you see her in Tulsa in November, 1942?"

"Yes."

"Did you see her in Brownsville, Texas—" Giesler began, but he was interrupted by objections and had to drop that line of questioning.

In that trial and in the paternity trial that followed, however, Giesler was able to establish as a matter of record that Getty had been footing the bill for a good many of Joan's expenses, especially for items like railroad tickets and hotel rooms.

Giesler's point was that Joan had been traveling about, not to provide boudoir entertainment for Chaplin, but for the benefit of "a man she had been keeping company with and who took her to Mexico." In New York, said Giesler, the girl registered at the fashionable Hotel Pierre "through the connivance of this man who owns the hotel." Getty owns the Pierre.

There were other implications, to which Getty replied out of court by saying, "It's ridiculous for Giesler to insinuate that Joan tried to blackmail me and that I had to give her money under threat. She never at any time in the years I have known her made any unpleasant threats of any kind."

When the time for Chaplin to take the stand in his own behalf, he showed himself, in Giesler's opinion, to be "the best witness I've ever seen in a law court." He managed to look humble, whether he felt that way or not. He also gave the impression of candor.

"Yes, I was intimate with her," he said, weeping. "I liked the girl."

After five hours of deliberation, the jury acquitted Chaplin of a charge which could have resulted in twenty-five years in prison and a twenty-five thousand dollar fine.

It looked like Chaplin's troubles were over. They weren't.

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Before the paternity suit came to trial, Joan had her baby, whom she named Carol Ann. Three eminent pathologists—Drs. Roy W. Hammack, Newton Evans, and Vernon L. Andrews—made tests of the blood of Joan, Charlie, and the baby. It was their unanimous opinion that Chaplin could not possibly be the baby's father; it was a scientific impossibility.

Nevertheless, Joan's new lawyer, Joseph Scott, opposed a motion by Chaplin to have the paternity suit thrown out of court. And Superior Court Judge Stanley Mosk agreed that "the ends of justice will best be served by a full and fair trial of the issues."

It seemed apparent that the trial would only be a formality, however. So Chaplin dropped Giesler and put his defense in the hands of his then regular attorney.

Scott's great emotional appeal wound up with these ringing words to the jury:

"There has been no one to stop Chaplin in his lecherous conduct all these years—except you. Wives and mothers all over the country are watching to see you stop him dead in his tracks. You'll sleep well the night you give this baby a name—the night you show him the law means him as well as the bums on Skid Row."

It wasn't good enough to win for Joan—but it was good enough to prevent a verdict in favor of Chaplin, in the face of the scientific evidence exonerating him.

And at a second trial Chaplin was adjudged the father of the child. The baby was alloted support of seventy-five dollars a week, to be increased to one hundred in time. And the child was entitled to the name of Chaplin.

Chaplin was understandably bitter about the verdict. He must have regretted the words he spoke after his acquittal on the Mann Act charge: "I've always had an abiding faith in the American people and justice."

But in the second paternity trial, as Dr. Vladimir Eliasberg wrote in *The Southern California Law Review* of July, 1945, "the Chaplin jury let sentimental considerations turn logic out of doors and failed dismally in its task of weighing the evidence."

In 1953 the California legislature passed a law outlawing

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paternity trials after blood tests have proved that the defendant cannot be the father.

While the trials were pending, the fifty-four-year-old comedian contracted his fourth marriage, to eighteen-year-old Oona O'Neill. It was to be his happiest marital venture.

It was the only happy thing in Chaplin's life for many years to follow. After the war, as the Cold War got underway and the American people became increasingly aware of the danger of Communism, Chaplin's support of the Reds' "peace" fronts brought him under fire more and more. People began to be reluctant to be seen with him, to associate with him. One of his greatest movies, *Monsieur Verdoux*, was picketed and boycotted so effectively that it had to be withdrawn from exhibition.

In 1952, after *Limelight* was previewed for Hollywood's elite—it earned their unanimous praise—Chaplin and his young bride took their children, who then numbered four, for a vacation in Europe. Their ship was no sooner at sea than the Attorney General, James P. McGranery, announced that he was rescinding Chaplin's re-entry permit. Chaplin couldn't return without a hearing. He could be held in custody as long as two years if he tried to come back.

Embittered still more, feeling, with reason, that the American authorities had resorted to cheap trickery to hit him instead of granting him an open hearing while he was in the United States, Chaplin decided against returning to Hollywood. He and Oona, who now have seven children, have lived ever since then at Vevey, near Lausanne, in Switzerland.

Chaplin has recently completed his memoirs, which will be awaited with considerable interest.

In 1953 Joan was found wandering barefoot, in a daze, on the streets of Torrance, California. She had arrived there from Mexico City, as nearly as the police could make out from her jumbled comments. She was taken to the psychopathic ward of Harbor General Hospital and then released. A few hours later she was again found wandering in a state of mental imbalance. Returned to the hospital, she was examined by a staff

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psychiatrist, Dr. V. J. Miller, who described her as a schizophrenic with a well organized delusional pattern. She was living in a world of fantasy. Judge William P. Haughton, sitting in Superior Court, committed Joan to a state hospital.

The big Chaplin mansion that witnessed such stormy scenes has been destroyed. The estate was subdivided. Now a covey of modern houses cover the site.

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VIII — Lupe Velez:
She Didn't Believe in Marriage

"I AM NO HYPOCRITE," Lupe Velez used to say, and everyone agreed with her. It was the custom for some Hollywood correspondents to write her name: "Lupe (rhymes with Whoopee!)." In a free-wheeling movie capital, she was the least inhibited of stars. Her customary greeting was a kiss instead of a handshake. At parties she occasionally climaxed her boasts about her charms by lifting her dress up about her neck; since she usually wore nothing under her dress, this was fairly effective proof of her claims.

She was only five feet one and a half inches tall and weighed a mere one hundred and twelve pounds. She looked like a teenager, and in fact she was only eighteen when she became a star. That may have been her curse, for throughout the rest of her life she was known for her adolescent appetites, her childish whims, the gaiety and the rage that seemed as shallow and brief as a bobbysoxer's.

But all this makes her sound unattractive, and nothing could be farther from the truth. Everybody loved Lupe. She was warm-hearted, generous, kind, fun-loving, and utterly without malice. In short, she had not only the faults of a teenager, but the virtues of one, too.

Born in San Luis Potosi, Mexico, on July 10, 1909, she was christened Guadalupe Velez de Villalobos. Her convent schooling ended when she was fourteen, and she went to work as a shopgirl in Mexico City. She studied dancing and appeared as the lead in a musical comedy staged by the dancing school. A producer decided she had the making of a dramatic actress and gave her a part in a Mexico City production

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of *Rataplan*. The American actor, Richard Bennett, visiting the Mexican capital, told her he thought she'd do well in motion pictures. Her first film job was in a Hal Roach comedy. In a very short time she won the feminine lead opposite Douglas Fairbanks in United Artists' *The Gaucho*, filmed in 1927 and released in 1928. For the next seventeen years she was one of the major names in Hollywood.

Her first love affair, as everyone knew—for Lupe was nothing if not indiscreet—was with Jack Gilbert. Hedda Hopper, in her memoirs, *From Under My Hat*, recalls Lupe asking her, about that time, whether she should marry Gilbert. "After all," Lupe pointed out, "I'm no lady."

Miss Hopper replied with a question of her own: "Lupe, what's the advantage of getting married? Tell me now, honestly."

Lupe took that as the answer she'd been waiting for. Beaming happily, she dashed to Gilbert's bungalow, yelling, "Hey, Jack, we don't have to get married——"

Gary Cooper was the most famous of Lupe's lovers. They met while acting together in the 1929 Western, *Wolf Song*. In later years Cooper would display the demeanor of a deacon —although a woman like Anita Ekberg was still capable of having a rousing effect on him—but in those days, when Cooper had just graduated from extra to star, he was one of the livelier spirits in Hollywood.

He bought Lupe an eagle for a pet. But she was too enthusiastic about sex to think that any creature should be forced to live without it. So he personally went out and trapped another eagle to keep it company. (The second eagle turned out to be a male, like the first.)

Lupe's antics—the time a horse nipped her and she turned around and bit the horse, for example—appeared endlessly amusing to Cooper. But the time came when he found her too demanding, too possessive, too exhausting.

Then Johnny Weissmuller, screen Tarzan, came along in 1933. He became Lupe's only husband. The marriage was a wild, violent succession of separations, reconciliations, and rows, ending finally in divorce in 1938.

After that the men came more frequently and lasted only

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briefly. The best known was Arturo de Cordova. Most of the others were undistinguished movie hopefuls and fringe characters. Often Lupe would show up in a night club with six or seven men in tow, and it was difficult to tell which of them was The Man. Perhaps they all were.

Lupe was famous for her dogs, a Sealyham and a Scottish terrier, Chips and Chops; for the pair of seats reserved for her for nearly two decades at a prize fight arena; for her extravagantly decorated house, in which her bedroom, furnished with a bar, was the center of activity. The bedroom was thirty feet long. It was all white—walls, ceiling, carpet, draperies, bed covers. The bed was eight feet square.

"We got so many people goin' in and out of this house—thirty a day, I'll bet—we can't keep in cigarettes," Lupe once said. She said she didn't give parties every day, "they just stop in—I come home sometimes and I say, 'Is this where I live?' But I love it. If I can't live this way I don' wanna live at all."

In the latter part of the Thirties, there were signs that Lupe's career was nearing an end. She did a number of *Mexican Spitfire* comedies, but little else, and soon they stopped, too. In 1938 she was on Broadway with Libby Holman and Clifton Webb in *You Never Know*. Then she made a couple of Mexican movies, *Nana* and *Zaza*.

"Why should I worry?" she said in 1944. I know I'm not worth anything—I can't sing well, I can't dance well. I've never done a thing that I like . . . and it comes from the bottom of my heart or I wouldn't say it."

Asked her ambition, she said, "I just want to have a little fun."

Fun, to Lupe, usually meant a man. Or men. She didn't believe in loving "just one man," as she often said. "There is no such thing as love the way we speak of it," she said. "There is just possession—that's what we humans have done to love. If you love a man you're supposed to sit home, sad and blue, waiting till he gets there. You go out with another man to have a good time, he gets mad—that's possession. And they ain't gonna possess me because I'm not sad and blue for anybody. I've got so many friends."

But Lupe Velez was just putting on a brave front. The teen-

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ager who never grew up knew at that moment that life was closing in on her. Life was closing in—and so was death.

His name was Harald Maresch, but he used the name "Harold Ramond" in his attempts to break into the movies. He was born in Austria of a French opera singer and a Yugoslav business man. At least that's what he always said. He was young and darkly handsome, and he told wonderful stories about his past, which was, as he told it, very adventurous—fighting the Nazis in Vienna and Prague, being captured and sent to Dachau concentration camp, escaping from Dachau and making his way to France, fighting the Nazis in Paris, then fleeing to the U.S. In wartime Hollywood, it sounded terribly romantic and exciting.

It was not surprising that Lupe should conceive a passion for the twenty-seven-year-old-actor. And it must have been at least flattering to him, as well as convenient. She took him everywhere and introduced him to everyone. Doors opened that might otherwise have been closed. But it was, like all of Lupe's "romances," a tempestuous affair. After a time, she began to have mixed feelings about the relationship.

About the beginning of November, 1944, Lupe gave Mary Morris of the New York newspaper *PM*, now defunct, an interview which was far more significant than most of the people who read it—or even Miss Morris herself—realized. Lupe told her she'd been in love. The reporter said that was nice.

"*No,* darling," Lupe said, "I was like a fool with a very unworthy person. Nobody saw me for years—I buried myself for this man—so he could shine."

The question of marriage arose. This is how Mary Morris reported Lupe's reaction:

"Lupe finally turned her head from the mirror, gazed at me for several seconds, then, with her voice pitched very low, for emphasis, she said, 'I don't believe in marriage, darling.'"

"She paused for this to make its total effect, then she continued. 'If there's children—okay. But a woman who has a career—today we're here—tomorrow we're sent somewhere. We travel—in our work we have lots of men friends. . . . I'm practical: husband and career don't mix.'"

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A few days later Lupe went to a doctor's office. When she left his office, she was biting her lip to keep back tears. She went to her home, where a birthday party was being held for her brother-in-law.

Lupe drew her sister into her bedroom and closed the door.

"Darling," she began, "I need help."

"Lupe, I'd do anything for you," she told her.

Lupe began to sob. She told her sister that she was going to have a baby. She was more than three months pregnant.

Her sister comforted her. Finally the tears came to an end.

"We made plans," her sister said later. "Lupe begged me to leave with her and go to Mexico. She said, 'You are married and can take the baby. Josie, I need your company so bad. We will go away.' "

"I said to her, 'Of course, Lupe, if you need me I will go, but first I want to go back with my husband to San Antonio and see about a house we are planning there.' "

"She cried again and begged me to write soon. Then she said, 'Josie, you come right back and we will have another long talk and then go away.' "

Lupe told her business manager, Bo Roos, that she was pregnant. "I asked Ramond what he intended to do about it," Roos said. "He said he would have to have a little time to think it over. Then he proposed a mock ceremony." Finally Harald said he'd marry Lupe only if she'd sign a document saying that she knew he was marrying her only to give her baby a name.

Her reply to that was a telephone call to Louella O. Parsons, the Hollywood columnist who had publicly announced the Velez-Ramond engagement the previous July. The breakup of the couple had not been announced. So Lupe called Lolly to tell her, "We had one big battle and I told him to get out of my house." When Lolly asked Lupe how Ramond spelled his name, the actress replied, "I don't know. I never did know. Who cares?"

And then she added, "I like my dogs, Chips and Chops, better." Which was undoubtedly true.

Still the fact of Lupe's pregnancy was a secret. But it was a fact that had to be dealt with, and quickly. Lupe called Roos.

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"Well, so," she said "It looks like I either have to go to Mexico for a while or to a doctor. What do you think?"

That night Lupe went to a premiere of her latest Mexican film, *Zaza*, with two friends, Estelle Taylor, former wife of Jack Dempsey, and Benita Oakie, wife of screen star Jack Oakie. Afterwards they all went back to Lupe's house

Roos called her there about 10:30. During their telephone conversation earlier in the day she had talked of suicide, and he had been worrying about it all day. He pleaded with her now not to kill herself. "Her last words," he recalled, "were a promise that she would do nothing until I talked to her the next day."

For hours Lupe talked with her two women friends about her predicament.

"I'm just weary with the whole world," she said. "People think that I fight. I have to fight for everything. I'm so tired of it all. Ever since I was a baby, I've been fighting. I've never met a man with whom I didn't have to fight to exist."

Miss Taylor said Lupe talked constantly of the baby.

"She said she had plenty of time to get rid of it," Miss Taylor recalled, "but she said, 'It's my baby. I couldn't commit murder and still live myself. I would rather kill myself.' "

In those hours of anguished conversation, it became apparent that Lupe Velez, the uninhibited, had always wanted a baby. And that she hungered just as painfully for the respectability and security of married life. Many women have borne children out of wedlock and reared them themselves, or arranged for their care—but Lupe Velez would be content with nothing less than a proper, respectable marriage.

Finally the other women had to leave. It was then 3:20 a.m Miss Taylor said she was afraid to go to her car alone. Lupe went with her.

"I don't know what you could be afraid of," Lupe said. "I'm getting to the place where the only thing of which I'm afraid is life itself."

The car went down the drive and away from the big Spanish style house on North Rodeo Drive. The little figure in the driveway stood looking after it until the red taillights could

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no longer be seen. It was very still. Silence lay like a mantle over the quiet streets.

Lupe went back to her bedroom. She lay on the bed, thinking—if the chaos in her hurt mind could be called thinking. About dawn she wrote two notes in her own eccentric English:

One note said:

"To Harald:

May God forgive you and forgive me, too, but I prefer to take my life away and our baby's before I bring him with shame or killin [sic] him.

Lupe."

On the back, as an afterthought, she added:

"How could you, Harald, fake such a great love for me and our baby when all the time you didn't want us. I see no other way out for me so goodby and good luck to you.

Love,

Lupe."

The other note was addressed to Lupe's secretary. It said:

"You and you alone know the facts and the reason why I am taking my own life. Forgive me and don't think bad of me. I love you, Mammy, so take care of my mother. And so goodby and try to forgive me. Say goodby to all my friends and to the American press that always was so nice to me."

Then she put on blue silk pajamas, brushed her hair carefully, climbed into bed and arranged herself neatly. She picked up a bottle of pills from her bedside table and began swallowing them, washing them down with water from a glass on the table. When she had swallowed them all, she lay back on the pillow.

That was how they found her in the morning, two hours after she died.

The first policeman to arrive at the house said, "She looked so small in that outsize bed that we thought at first she was a doll."

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IX — Ingrid Bergman:
The Saint Was a Woman

STROMBOLI IS the name of a three-thousand-foot volcano in the Lipari Islands, which rise from the Tyrrhenian Sea north of Sicily and west of the toe of Italy. It is also the name of a motion picture directed by Roberto Rossellini in 1949. The filming was done on location on the island of Stromboli. During the production, an eruption occurred. But it was not the volcano.

It was the star, Ingrid Bergman, a cool-looking Swedish beauty who awakened like an Alaskan volcano that has been simmering under a glacier.

In the space of a few months, Ingrid Bergman, who had been admired with something close to adoration by the American movie-goers as a person as ethereal as the St. Joan she had recently portrayed on the screen, was plunged into a scandal of cosmic proportions, even for Hollywood.

Few, if any, of the people who knew her would have expected it, although her friends had known for some time that all was not well with her marriage. The customary view of Scandinavians as dispassionate folk prevented most people from recognizing that Ingrid Bergman was, after all, a woman, with a woman's emotions. That stereotype overlooked the fact that Sweden's attitude toward sex is probably the most liberal in all Europe.

It was in Stockholm that Ingrid was born, on August 29, 1915, the only child of Mr. and Mrs. Justus Bergman. Her father operated a camera shop. When Ingrid was two, her mother died. Her father's sister, Ellen, moved into the house and took the place of a mother.

Her childhood was lonely, in a house with only two elderly

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people. As a child, Ingrid was unusually tall, and she was very self-conscious about her height. She became shy and avoided other children. She lived in her own little world of make-believe.

When she was twelve, her father died after an illness. Seven months later, when Ingrid and her aunt were alone together in the house, Aunt Ellen died suddenly. Ingrid went to live with her Uncle Otto and his five children. For a girl who didn't know how to play with other children, life with five cousins was agony. And Uncle Otto didn't help, because he had vehement religious prejudice against the theater, and he became very angry when he learned that his young niece had already set her heart on a dramatic career.

Ingrid was sent to a private school for girls. One day the gymnasium class was canceled and the girls were left in a big hall, with no teacher and no instructions. So Ingrid went up on the stage, summoning all her courage and said, "I will entertain you." Only a psychiatrist could explain how a child so frightened of other children could dare such a thing.

The other girls laughed at Ingrid, but she went ahead with what she had in mind. She told them that she would present a play—and that she would play all the parts herself. She did a French farce called *The Green Elevator,* which had six parts.

It is a pleasure to record that Ingrid wowed 'em. Their applause, won the hard way, made that day the happiest in her life.

Her two favorite stories were those of Joan of Arc and of Tristan and Isolde. Joan was courage and human greatness. Tristan and Isolde was romantic, earthly love, which seemed like a remote, unattainable thing for a gawky teenage girl who thought of herself as dreadfully unattractive.

By sheer stubbornness, Ingrid wore down her uncle's resistance. Finally he gave her permission to try for a scholarship to the state-owned Royal Dramatic Theater School after she graduated from high school. He was sure she'd fail the examination.

The test was an audition, held in a playhouse before the judges and the staff instructors. There were more than one hundred candidates that night. After each had completed a

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reading, there would be polite applause from the judges and instructors. But after Ingrid gave her reading, there wasn't a sound from them. Someone waved his hand as though to say that she could leave the theater, so she went out and trudged unhappily home.

A couple of days later she was notified that she had won a scholarship. Her audience had been too spellbound to applaud!

Never before had Ingrid had a boy friend. But at dramatic school, where she was one of the best students, Ingrid found herself much sought after. Two months after she entered the school she met Petter Lindstrom on a blind date. She was eighteen, he twenty-seven. He was a six-foot-two farm boy who had become a successful dentist in Stockholm.

At the end of her first year in the dramatic school, she was offered a job with Svensk Filmindustrie, one of the biggest Swedish motion picture companies. With the encouragement of Lindstrom, of whom she was seeing a good deal by then, she decided to go into the movies. In her first film she played the part of a maid in a cheap hotel. Then she played opposite Sweden's matinee idol of the time.

About that time Lindstrom decided he'd rather be a doctor of medicine than a dentist. He began his medical education—but in his brief spare time he continued to court Ingrid. On July 7, 1936, they became engaged, a few weeks before Ingrid's twenty-first birthday. Almost exactly a year later—on July 10, 1937—they were married in the little white Lutheran church at Stode, a lumbering town in northeastern Sweden where Lindstrom's family lived.

Lindstrom, whom Ingrid found to be kind and considerate, had reduced his dental practice to four days a week in order to allow more time for his medical training. In addition, he now took on the active management of Ingrid's business affairs. This was becoming a major task, for she was becoming more of a star with each picture.

It must have been difficult for Lindstrom, but he tried manfully to submerge any resentment of her career or any jealousy of the actors with whom she worked. When she made a pic-

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ture in Berlin for the German company, UFA, Lindstrom stayed in Stockholm. But one day she found him waiting for her in the lobby of the Adlon Hotel, where she was staying. He had missed her, so he had come to Berlin. But he had checked in, not at the Adlon, but at a small hotel nearby. He didn't want people to know he was there because he didn't think it was good for an actress to have a husband always hanging around.

On September 20, 1938, a daughter was born to them. They called her Friedel (for Ingrid's mother) Pia (an anagram of the initials of Petter Aron—Lindstrom's middle name—and Ingrid). Three or four months later, Ingrid's last picture before her confinement, *Intermezzo*, was released. David O. Selznick decided to remake the picture in an English version and to acquire Miss Bergman as his own star. He sent Katherine (Kay) Brown to her to arrange the deal.

Ingrid was reluctant to leave her husband, who could not spare time from his medical studies, and her baby, who was too young to travel, but Lindstrom insisted. And in her heart Ingrid was eager to do a picture in Hollywood, the movie capital of the world.

So in 1939 she went to Hollywood, alone, to make one picture.

The picture was *Intermezzo*, with Leslie Howard. When her work on it was done, Ingrid went back to Europe.

And then the war broke out. It seemed likely that Sweden might have to fight. Tension mounted in Stockholm.

In Hollywood, Selznick released *Intermezzo* to the applause of the critics and the public. He telephoned Ingrid that he was exercising the option in her contract. He wanted her to come back to Hollywood for seven years of picture-making.

Lindstrom, fearful that his wife and baby might be caught up in the war, urged her to accept the offer, even though it would mean a separation for them. He drove Ingrid and Pia, as they always called the baby, across Europe by car to Genoa—Italy was then neutral—where they boarded the *Rex*, the last liner to carry civilian passengers.

When she first arrived in New York, Selznick was unsure of

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what he would do next. So she remained in New York long enough to appear on the stage in Ferenc Molnar's *Liliom* with Burgess Meredith.

In May she moved to Hollywood. About the middle of the summer Lindstrom, lonely for his family, came to New York on a Swedish freighter and Ingrid joined him there. He didn't like New York. After two weeks he returned to Sweden.

That September she made her second Hollywood picture, *Adam Had Four Sons*, on loan to Columbia Pictures. Then she was lent to M-G-M for *Rage in Heaven*, and after that *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

Meanwhile Lindstrom had found himself unbearably lonely in Sweden. He asked Ingrid to see if he could get into a medical school in America, so that he could complete his studies closer to her. Through friends of Selznick, she was able to get him into the University of Rochester medical school. They'd be a continent apart—but at least they'd be on the same continent, and they could get together from time to time.

In September, 1943 he completed his courses at Rochester—and what a chore they must have been, for a professional man learning a new language at the same time!—and transferred to Stanford University in California for postgraduate training. Now he was a mere 480 miles from Ingrid and Pia.

It was probably inevitable that the two should grow apart, for they were not really living together. It was about this time that Ingrid's most intimate friends began to detect the first indications that all was not well with the Lindstrom marriage. She never criticized him to her friends, but they became aware that she herself recognized certain of his shortcomings. (And he undoubtedly was coming to see hers.) Once, when a friend asked her at that time if she'd choose her marriage over her career, she snapped, "Never!"

Nevertheless, in 1944 the Lindstroms bought the first house they'd ever owned, a stone and redwood structure at 1220 North Benedict Canyon Drive. And that year they were finally able to live together, as man and wife, in that house, for Lindstrom completed his studies and moved to Los Angeles, where he joined the staff of the County General Hospital.

Gradually the two grew farther and farther apart. His life

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was in medicine, especially in neurosurgery. He was completely immersed in it. Her life was in the motion picture industry, which gave her an Academy Award for *Gaslight* in 1944 (in 1956 she would win a second Oscar for *Anastasia*). They had different interests, different friends, different activities. He still handled her business affairs, but that didn't help matters, because the executives with whom he had to deal felt that he was high-handed, and her friends thought that he was too domineering in his attitude to his wife, too.

In the spring of 1946, during a long visit to New York, Ingrid began, for the first time, to be seen in public with men other than her husband, who was back in Los Angeles. Bob Capa, Cary Grant, Whitney Bolton, and others squired her about town. It was undoubtedly all very innocent.

But it showed which way the wind was blowing.

It was during that vacation in New York that she saw *Open City*.

"Wasn't it wonderful!" she exclaimed to her friend and public relations man, Joseph Henry Steele, as they walked out of the theater afterward. "It makes our pictures look silly!"

The picture was directed by Roberto Rossellini. Ingrid, like everyone else in the American film industry, had never heard of him before.

In October, 1946, for the first time, Ingrid told her husband she wanted a divorce. He talked her out of it.

A month later she opened in *Joan of Lorraine* on Broadway to rave notices from the critics. But later, when Hollywood got its hands on the script for a screenplay, the spirit went out of the story. Ingrid's filmed *Joan of Arc* didn't measure up to her stage success.

In the spring of 1948 she took a two-week vacation in New York. One afternoon she went to a movie. It was *Paisan*, and it consisted of six entirely separate incidents.

The director was Roberto Rossellini.

Afterwards she had dinner with Irene Selznick and told her how much she'd like to make a picture with a director capable of such work. Miss Selznick suggested that she write to Rossellini and tell him that. "He might get the wrong idea," Ingrid

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said. Miss Selznick reassured her. And a few days later Lindstrom told his wife he saw nothing wrong in the idea.

So she sat down and wrote a letter:

"Dear Mr. Rossellini—

I saw your films, *Open City* and *Paisan,* and enjoyed them very much. If you need a Swedish actress who speaks English very well, who has not forgotten her German, who is not very understandable in French, and who in Italian knows only 'ti amo', I am ready to come and make a film with you.

Best regards,
Ingrid Bergman"

The son of an architect, Roberto Rossellini was then forty-three. He had dissipated a legacy, worked as a racing driver and at odd jobs, then gone into films, first as a cutter and later as a director. He had also had one wife and innumerable mistresses.

But he had never had anything of the stature of Ingrid Bergman, as actress, woman, or wife.

A cable arrived in America:

"Mrs. Ingrid Bergman:

I have just received with great emotion your letter which happens to arrive on the anniversary of my birthday and the most precious gift. It is absolutely true that I dreamed to make a film with you and from this very moment I will do everything that such dream becomes reality as soon as possible. I will write you a long letter to submit to you my ideas. With my admiration please accept the expression of my gratitude together with my best regards.

Roberto Rossellini
Hotel Excelsior Rome"

The result of all this was that Ingrid Bergman, who was in London filming *Under Capricorn* had a meeting in Paris with

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Rossellini, who went there during a lull in filming *The Miracle*. Lindstrom was there, too, and it was agreed that Ingrid would make a movie with Rossellini.

When he got back to Rome, Rossellini told his friends, "Swedish women are the easiest in the world to impress because they have such cold husbands. The love they get is an analgesic balm instead of a tonic."

The following January he flew to New York to accept the Film Critics' award for *Paisan* as the best foreign-language film of the year. Before boarding the plane in Rome, he said to the people around him, "I'm going to put the horns on Mr. Bergman."

A portent of what was to come was Walter Winchell's exclusive tip on the radio: "Ingrid Bergman's one and only love is coming to Hollywood to see her!"

Rossellini was on a train bound for Los Angeles at that moment.

He stayed at the Lindstroms' home, by invitation of Ingrid and her husband, and she took him everywhere—to parties, to the beach, to unusual places—with her husband's explicit approval.

Then Rossellini flew back to Italy and three weeks later, on March 20, Ingrid landed at Rome's airport. Rossellini's welcoming words were, "*Je t'aime*" ("I love you" in French).

Their affair began almost immediately.

In a few days Ingrid wrote a letter to her husband, telling him about her passion for Rossellini and indicating her desire for a divorce. She gave the letter to Rossellini to read and mail. He not only read it—he even showed it to his friends, who numbered half of Rome. Soon everyone knew what it said:

"Petter lilla [little]—

It will be very difficult for you to read this letter and it is difficult for me to write it. But I believe it is the only way. I would like to explain everything from the beginning, but you already know enough. And I would like to ask forgiveness, put that seems ridiculous.

It is not altogether my fault, and how can you forgive

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that I went to stay with Roberto. I know he has also written you and told you all that there is to tell.

It was not my intention to fall in love and go to Italy forever. After all our plans and dreams, you know that is true. But how can I help it or change it? You saw in Hollywood how my enthusiasm for Roberto grew and grew, and you know how much alike we are, with the same desire for the same kind of work and the same understanding of life.

I thought maybe I could conquer the feeling I had for him when I saw him in his own milieu, so different from mine. But it turned out just the opposite. The people, the life, the country is not strange. It is what I always wanted.

I had not the courage to talk more about him at home than I did with you as it all seemed so incredible, like an adventure, and at the same time I didn't realize the depth of his feelings.

Min [my] Petter, I know how this letter falls like a bomb on our house, our Pelle [a name they'd chosen for their next child], our future, our past so filled with sacrifice and help on your part.

And now you stand alone in the ruins and I am unable to help you. Stackars lilla pappa men also stackars lilla mama [poor little papa, but also poor little mama].

Mama"

And then the two—Ingrid and Roberto—cast caution to the winds and behaved for all the world to see like two lovers. On April 13 the first report of the affair appeared in the American press, cautiously phrased because of the fear of a libel suit. But the stories began to pour out of Italy in a torrent. And as the lovers demonstrated their disregard for discretion, the news stories grew increasingly frank and detailed.

To an America which was used to thinking of Ingrid Bergman as Joan of Arc, a holy creature, it was more than an offense against the moral code—it was virtually blasphemy.

Newspaper editorials and columnists condemned her. Clergymen preached sermons ripping into her as a symptom of the decaying morality of the postwar world. The usual blue-

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noses in the women's clubs, civic groups, and self-appointed censorship groups called for a boycott of her films.

Lindstrom had a secret meeting with Ingrid at Messina. He turned thumbs down on a divorce. He said she must finish the picture and return to Hollywood; then they'd discuss it.

The upshot of the meeting was a public statement by Ingrid in which she said that after finishing work on *Stromboli* she would "leave Italy and meet my husband either in Sweden or the United States."

The scandal—and the hue and cry—grew steadily worse. Finally Ingrid issued a public statement that she had asked her husband for a divorce.

And still the furor raged on. The Swedish newspapers now were saying that Ingrid was a disgrace to her homeland, to abandon her husband and child and make a public spectacle of herself with a notorious Italian roué.

By November, 1949 rumors were flying that Ingrid was pregnant. On December 12 Louella O. Parsons broke the news in the Hearst newspapers:

INGRID BERGMAN BABY DUE
IN THREE MONTHS AT ROME

The fat was really in the fire.

On February 2, 1950, the baby, a boy they named Robertino, was born. On February 9 Ingrid got a Mexican divorce *in absentia*. But even then legal technicalities delayed the wedding of Ingrid and Rossellini. It was not until May 24 that they were able to get married—and then it had to be a Mexican wedding by proxy, with the principals in Rome and the stand-ins in Juarez.

At last it appeared that Ingrid's life could settle into tranquillity.

Lindstrom later got an American divorce, but the friction between him and Ingrid continued because of their disagreement over when or how she was to be permitted to see Pia. Her lawyer went to court to try to improve her rights with respect to the girl, but the headlines after the hearing read: "I

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Don't Love My Mother, Pia Says." She said she didn't miss her mother and didn't have any desire to see her.

As was to be expected, Lindstrom won the court fight.

Five days earlier, on June 18, 1952, Ingrid had given birth to twin girls, Isabella and Isotta.

Stromboli had been an artistic and a box office flop. Ingrid and her new husband made a number of other pictures together; they were all very bad. It appeared that these two might make a great pair in love, but not in art.

In 1955 she did a film directed by Jean Renoir in Paris. The following year Darryl Zanuck had the courage to sign her to a contract to do a movie for him; it was *Anastasia,* which would win her a second Oscar.

On December 1, 1956, she opened on the Paris stage in *Tea and Sympathy* and scored a tremendous hit.

Rossellini was wild with jealousy and frustration. A week later he left for India. As they parted, Ingrid knew it was the beginning of the end of their marriage.

In India Rossellini made a movie and entered into a liaison with Sonali Das Gupta, a twenty-seven-year-old married woman who was a scriptwriter. *The New York Daily News* broke the story and disclosed that the woman was pregnant. It seemed like an old story.

In 1958 the marriage of Ingrid and Rossellini was annulled in Italy. On December 21 Ingrid was married to Swedish impresario Lars Schmidt in London.

The tide of public opinion in America had turned. She had been welcomed back to the United States with affection, respect, and wild enthusiasm.

Best of all, she had brought about a reconciliation with Pia, who was now called Jenny Ann.

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X — Lana Turner: *Death of a Playmate*

JULIA JEAN MILDRED FRANCES TURNER was born in Wallace, a small mining town in Idaho, on February 8, 1920. Her father, John Virgil Turner, an itinerant miner, stevedore, and laborer, and her mother, Mildred, separated when the girl was seven, although she was not told of the breakup. She was sent to live with friends of her mother at Modesto, California. The family with whom she lived treated her "like a scullery maid": she had to get up early to make breakfast for the family, prepare the dinner before leaving for school, do the family laundry on Saturday and the ironing on Sunday. When the daughter of the house neglected a small household chore, the Turner girl was blamed; she was beaten with a stick until "my back was bruised and bleeding."

On December 15, 1930, when the girl was ten, her father was murdered in San Francisco. He had just left a crap game the winner, and someone knew it. That someone cracked his skull from behind, robbed the fallen man, and left him to die in the night. The murder was never solved.

It was not until the murder that the girl learned that her parents had been separated. Her mother went to Modesto to break the news of the father's death. There she discovered how the child had been treated. She decided to take the girl back to San Francisco with her.

It was a bleak girlhood. The mother, a hairdresser, made little money. Occasionally she was out of work, and she'd have to pawn some of the family possessions for food money.

By January, 1936 the mother and her daughter were living in Los Angeles. Her daughter was in high school—or was supposed to be. But one Tuesday the girl played hooky, and what

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happened to her as a result has set back the cause of education a good many years.

She was "discovered."

The girl, by now a very curvesome young thing, was sipping a strawberry malt at the soda fountain in the Top Hat Malt Shop, at Sunset and Highland Avenues, when a man with a little black mustache, who had been looking at her for some time, approached her and asked, "How would you like to be in pictures?"

Now, even a sixteen-year-old girl knows how corny a line that is.

This was that rare time when the question was put in all seriousness, however. The man gave her his card and asked her to call him. The card identified him as William Wilkerson, editor and publisher of *The Hollywood Reporter,* a powerful motion picture trade journal.

The girl had been wearing a sweater in the malt shop. In her first picture, Mervyn Le Roy's *They Won't Forget,* the second scene showed her in a sweater hurrying along a crowded street. The girl was embarrassed by her appearance when the scene was shown ("I looked so *cheap!*" she cried), but it produced a name that shot her to fame almost instantly.

She became "The Sweater Girl."

The very day that scene was filmed, the girl went with Wilkerson to the Zeppo Marx talent agency. LeRoy was there. For half an hour they all sat around trying to think of a first name for her. None of her real names would do. Finally—out of the blue—the girl herself suggested Lana. Everyone accepted it at once.

A star had been born: Lana Turner.

In the years that followed, she made innumerable movies, none of them very good. (Twenty years later she finally won an Academy Award nomination, but not the Oscar, for her acting in *Peyton Place.*)

She managed to keep in the headlines with her marriages and her romances, which were more numerous than those of most Hollywood stars. Her first husband was band leader Artie Shaw, whom she married on their first date. She was engaged to attorney Greg Bautzer at the time, but she became

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annoyed at him for calling off a date, so she eloped with Shaw. That marriage lasted four months.

Then came Stephen Crane, an actor, whom she married in 1943, after a month of dating him. But it turned out that Crane's divorce from his first wife was not yet final when he married Lana. She was forced to get an annulment of the invalid marriage. And then she found she was pregnant. She remarried Crane. A year after the child was born, Lana divorced him.

Husband No. 3 was playboy socialite Henry J. (Bob) Topping, who had just gotten a divorce from Arlene Judge. (*That* had been quite a marriage, even for Hollywood. When Arlene and Bob married, she became her ex-husband's sister-in-law and he became stepfather to his nephew. Probably the genealogists didn't care.) That marriage lasted four and a half years. It ended in Nevada in 1952.

The fourth man to risk the perils of matrimony with Lana was Lex Barker, who was Tarzan in the movies. In 1953 he became Lana's husband and in 1957 he joined the growing club of Lana's ex-husbands.

In between the husbands there were many less formal attachments. "Let's be honest," Lana once said, "the physical attracts me first. Then, if you get to know the man's mind and soul and heart, that's icing on the cake."

The list of men in her life was like a telephone book. They included Turhan Bey, Robert Hutton, Rory Calhoun, John Dall, Frank Sinatra, Howard Hughes, broadcasting executive Charles P. Jaeger, Tyrone Power.

After she shed Lex Barker, however, Lana was temporarily manless. One day she got a telephone call.

And the greatest drama of her life began.

The voice on the other end of the wire said his name was Johnny Stompanato. They had some mutual friends. He'd like a date.

It seems incredible, but he got it.

Stompanato had been born at Woodstock, Illinois, in 1925, although he didn't tell Lana that; he led her to believe he was ten years older than his actual age, so she wouldn't realize

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that he was younger than she. In 1943 he had graduated from Kemper Military School at Bonneville, Missouri. After that he went briefly to Notre Dame University before entering the Marine Corps in 1944. In 1947 he was discharged from the service. During that time he had somehow managed to get married and divorced twice.

Hollywood is a great town for a guy on the make, and Johnny was on the make when he got out of the service. He went to Los Angeles. And there, in 1948, he got together with gangster Mickey Cohen. Apparently his first job was bodyguard. Later he began to operate on his own, or perhaps as an agent of Cohen. The Kefauver Committee took a considerable interest in the affairs of the two men, but was not able to establish very much beyond the fact that Cohen and Stompanato frequently exchanged sums of money that Cohen insisted were loans, involving as much as four thousand dollars.

Committee counsel Rudolph Halley suggested that Stompanato might be getting his money through blackmail.

"Not him," said Cohen. "Those stories are made up. He was the kind of guy that never even beat up a dame. If he got into trouble, I'd have to protect him."

After Stompanato's death, his brother visited Beverly Hills Police Chief Clinton H. Anderson. They were anxious to get "some unidentified missing property" of Stompanato. Anderson gave him the address he had for the dead man—the Del Capri Hotel in West Los Angeles.

But Stompanato's apartment had been broken into a few hours after his death was announced in the press. Someone—it was never discovered who—had ransacked the place. What they were looking for, and whether they found it, is anybody's guess.

A few days later a friend of Stompanato, an innocent person, went to Anderson's office and gave him a little wooden box. Stompanato, not trusting his underworld associates, had given it to the "clean" friend to keep for him. In the box the police found a .32 caliber snub-nosed revolver, bank books, personal papers, and rolls of film negatives "Printed and enlarged," Anderson disclosed in *Beverly Hills Is My Beat*, his memoirs, "the negatives revealed pictures of nude women in

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compromising situations. Some of the pictures had apparently been taken while the victims were unaware they were being photographed, and they were recognizable. The pictures would have been a gold mine for a blackmailer." Anderson, for obvious reasons, did not identify any of the women in the photos.

Anderson says that the police had been watching Stompanato's activities with interest for years. The police "knew he had obtained large sums of money from individuals who were afraid to complain to the police, and we were aware that he had accepted money from a number of his women friends."

Tall, handsome, dark in hair and skin, Johnny was fairly obvious. He liked to wear his shiny silk shirts open to the belt, displaying his manly torso. In short, he was the beach athlete type—scarcely the person one would expect a movie queen to fall for. But many women who were rich and famous succumbed to his somewhat dubious charms.

One might expect a women in Lana Turner's position to investigate any man who attempts to become a close friend, and the most cursory check would have turned up the fact that Stompanato was, to put it mildly, unsavory. But Lana probably knew that anyhow. It has been reported that she first heard of him through Mickey Cohen himself. Movie stars have long been suckers for gangsters, and Lana appears to have been attracted by them, like so many others.

Cheryl Crane, Lana's daughter, liked Stompanato. Cheryl, the offspring of Lana's second marriage, had had to adapt herself to many situations in her young life (she was fourteen when Stompanato died).

She had grown up in a succession of private schools, private camps, ranches. She had never had a chance to be close to her mother, who was too eagerly seeking affection to bestow it.

The fourteen months during which her mother saw Johnny Stompanato were, by and large, a happy time for Cheryl. She had never had so much attention paid to her. She went horseback riding with Johnny, swimming with him, and so on. When he and Lana were off somewhere, it was to Johnny that

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Cheryl wrote most often, tossing in a line asking how her mother was. And when Cheryl was off somewhere with Lana, a very unusual circumstance, the girl always wrote to Johnny

"Johnny and that kid was like that," said Mickey Cohen later, crossing his fingers. "She was crazy about him."

This was one of Cheryl's letters to Stompanato in 1957:

"Dear Johnny—

First of all, please excuse this paper but it's really all I have right now.

I just got your letter this morning because I was home for the weekend.

How have you been? And how is mother?

Rowena [a mare owned by Cheryl] is just fine. I'm not afraid of her any more and she acts just like she used to last summer. Yes, I still want to take her to Estes Park this summer. I thought for a while I wouldn't be able to handle her but now I know I can.

School is just fine, but not getting any easier. I went to see Johnny Mathis at the Crescendo Sunday nite and he was terrific. Have you been doing any water skiing lately? Please do, and think of me. I love it. When are you all coming back? Soon, I hope.

Love ya,

Cheri"

Her mother's letters to Stompanato from London, where she was making a movie, a few weeks later were not terribly restrained. These are typical excerpts:

"Sweetheart, please keep well, because I need you so—and so you will always be strong and able to caress me, hold me, tenderly at first and crush me into your very own being. . . ."

"My Beloved Love, just this morning your precious exciting letter arrived. . . . Every line warms me and makes me ache and miss you each tiny moment—and it's true—it's beautiful, yet terrible. But, just so is deep love. . . . Hold me, dear lover. . . ."

"I'm your woman and I need you, my man! To love and be loved by—don't ever doubt or forget that. . . ."

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"'My romance, hah! It's a hell of a lot more than that! that's for sure. . . . There's so much to say—but it's easier when you're holding me 'all through the night.' And we can either whisper, or shout, or scream our love for each other to each other. . . . And oh, so many, many kisses. . . !"

Lana's letters became more and more importunate. She couldn't wait to get home to Johnny. She had to have him with her at once, in London.

So Stompanato borrowed a couple of thousand dollars from Mickey Cohen and flew to London.

At first it was everything that Lana had promised herself it would be. In Johnny's arms her hungers were satisfied. But not all of his, it seemed.

They began to argue about money. She had almost always picked up the tab, and she had given him ten thousand dollars on one occasion. But now he wanted her to buy a story on which to base a screenplay. The "earnest money" was one thousand dollars, but Lana wouldn't put it up because her financial advisors frowned on it.

This was especially painful to Johnny because he'd begun to develop acting ambitions. It had been his idea to star in the movie.

Finally they had an argument so violent that Lana became frightened. He threatened to disfigure her or cripple her.

"After he had choked me and thrown me down," she later recalled, "he went into the bathroom and he got a razor and he came and grabbed my head, all the time screaming at me violent things. Then he said that it may only start with a little one now, just give me a taste of it, and even so, he would do worse. I pleaded, I said I would do anything, anything, just please don't hurt me."

"If you claim to love me, how can you hurt me? Please don't."

"As he let go of me, he said, 'That's just to let you know I am not kidding. Don't think you can ever get away.'"

The frightened actress told her director, who asked Scotland Yard to handle the matter in such a way as to avoid publicity. The Scotland Yard men escorted Stompanato to a plane and made sure he went back to the United States.

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But after Lana returned to the States, there was a reconciliation, and she and Stompanato went off to Acapulco for a seven-week vacation. Later she was to say that she was terribly afraid of him then, but the people who saw them in Mexico at the time don't believe it. They say that it was Lana who kept pursuing Johnny, not the other way around.

Her water skiing instructor said Lana didn't like Johnny to talk to anyone else. The skipper of the yacht *Rosa Maria*, on which Lana and Johnny spent nearly half their time at Acapulco, said, "I couldn't understand why a movie queen would have to keep chasing after him. But no matter what he was doing on board, she was at his side. He would be sitting in a deck chair and she would come along and all of a sudden sit right down in his lap without being asked."

Finally the Mexican idyll was at an end, and the two headed back to Hollywood—and murder.

On April 4, 1958, Stephen Crane, who had long since abandoned acting in order to become the owner of a restaurant called the Luau, was at his restaurant when he got a message that there was a telephone call for him. When he reached the phone, he heard Cheryl's voice:

"Daddy, Daddy, come quick! Something terrible has happened!"

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"Don't ask any questions, Daddy—just hurry, *please!*"

Crane didn't have his car at the restaurant. He asked a friend, who was at the bar, to drive him. They sped to 730 North Bedford Drive in Beverly Hills. As Crane leaped from the car, Cheryl called out from the doorway:

"Daddy!"

"Yes, I'm coming," he called, sprinting up the driveway.

Cheryl turned and ran.

"Wait a minute, baby," her father called out.

He caught up with her and they ran up the stairs together to the second floor. Lana was there.

"Something terrible has happened," she said.

He looked past her into the bedroom on the right. A man was lying there on the floor on his back.

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"What happened, Cherie?" Crane asked his daughter.

"I did it, Daddy," she said, "but I didn't mean to. He was going to hurt Mommy."

She was sobbing, her adolescent body wracked with the great grief. "I didn't mean to, I didn't mean to," she kept sobbing.

"I know you didn't," Lana said, putting her arms around the girl.

"I just wanted to protect you," Cheryl stammered between sobs, as her mother and father tried to comfort her.

Two doctors were summoned. As they began working over Stompanato, they ordered an ambulance. The cop on the beat arrived then and called his headquarters to give the alarm. Before Chief Anderson could arrive, attorney Jerry Giesler was on the scene. Somebody in the family had summoned him.

The investigation disclosed that there had been a wild quarrel between Lana and Johnny. It had begun because he was jealous, or so she said, of her plans to have dinner with some friends a few days later without him. But another cause was her discovery that he had lied about his age, that he was actually five years younger than she.

About 8:30 p.m. Stompanato, who had spent the afternoon with Lana, returned to the house and resumed the fight. Lana walked into Cheryl's room and he followed her, "saying some very bad things . . . the language was bad, swearing." She told him she'd warned him not to talk like that "in front of the baby." She walked out of the room and downstairs, with the shouting hoodlum following her.

"I—I—I was just finding out too many lies," she later said at the inquest, "and that this one more that I had found out was just not the worst lie."

She told Johnny, "I can't go on like this. I have begged, I have pleaded for you to leave me alone."

They went back upstairs, Lana saying, "There's no use discussing it any farther; I can't go on like this and I want you to leave me alone."

(All of this disagrees with the statements from Acapulco, but the only one who could dispute the matter, Stompanato himself, is beyond caring.)

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This is Lana's story of what happened after that, as told at the inquest:

"He grabbed me by the arms . . . and started shaking me and cursing me very badly, and saying that, as he had told me before, no matter what I did, how I tried to get away, he would never leave me, that if he said jump, I would jump; if he said hop, I would hop; and I would have to do anything and everything he told me or he'd cut my face or cripple me.

"And if—when—if it went beyond that, he would kill me, and my daughter, and my mother. And he said it did not matter what, he would get me where it would hurt the most, and that would be my daughter and my mother.

"I broke away from his holding my—holding me, and I turned around to face the door, and my daughter was standing there. And I said, 'Please, Cheryl, please don't listen to any of this. I beg you to go back to your room.' "

"She looked at me, and I think that—as if to say, 'Are you sure, Mother?' Because I know I repeated it, and I begged her. I said, 'Please, Cheryl, don't listen to this. I beg you to go back to your room.' "

"I turned to Mr. Stompanato after I had closed the door, and I said, 'That's just great, my child had to hear all that, the horrible—' And . . . 'I can't go through any more.' "

"And he kept swearing and threatening me, and he had had a jacket and a shirt hanging in the closet. I forget exactly when it was there or if he had brought another change from his apartment. Anyway, it was hanging there and he walked away from me and went to the closet, and it was on a hanger. And he walked back to me and was holding the jacket on the hanger in a way that he was going to strike me with it."

"And I said, 'Don't—don't ever touch me again. I am—I am absolutely finished. This is the end. And I want you to get out.' "

"And after I said that, I was walking toward the bedroom door, and he was right behind me, and I opened it, and my daughter came in."

"I swear it was so fast, I—I truthfully thought she had hit him in the stomach. The best I can remember, they came together and they parted. I still never saw a blade.'

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"Mr. Stompanato grabbed himself here [indicating]. . . . And he started to move forward, and he made almost a half turn, and then dropped on his back, and when he dropped, his arms went out, so that I still did not see that there was blood or a wound until I ran over to him, and I saw his sweater was cut, and I lifted the sweater up and I saw his wound."

"I remember only barely hearing my daughter sobbing and I ran into my bathroom, which is very close, and I grabbed a towel. I didn't know what to do."

"And then I put the towel there, and Mr. Stompanato was making very dreadful sounds in his throat of gasping—terrible sounds—and I went to the telephone and I called my mother because I had been out of the country for so long, and I could not remember my doctor's number."

But Johnny Stompanato was beyond the help of any doctor. The knife that Cheryl had run down to the kitchen to get had dealt him a mortal blow. Whether she had plunged the knife into his abdomen or whether he had run upon the knife in pursuing Lana is a question that even Lana and Cheryl, who were there, apparently can't answer.

But certainly the wound was one that an army of doctors could not repair in time. The knife had slashed through the abdominal wall, the liver, and up through the aorta, the main artery.

Stompanato's brother charged that the whole story didn't come out at the inquest, and many of the dead man's friends felt the same way. Some indicated doubt that the fourteen-year-old girl had held the knife, but they overlooked the fact that this girl already was more than five feet eight inches tall. Others suggested that the real cause of the quarrel had not been disclosed; they hinted that Stompanato had been paying too much attention to Cheryl herself.

But none of those challenges to the official story is justified by the facts that were made public at the inquest.

Some additional facts might have come out if a damage suit, filed on behalf of Stompanato's son against Lana, Crane, and Cheryl, had been permitted to go to trial. The suit

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charged that "doubt" existed over whether Cheryl or Lana wielded the eight-inch knife—and whether Stompanato might not have been killed "wilfully and intentionally." But the suit was settled out of court for twenty thousand dollars.

The scandal didn't hurt Lana's career. Indeed, it helped it. Her pictures did better at the box office than ever.

She lost custody of Cheryl, who was put in the care of Lana's mother. Cherly was hard to keep in hand, especially after the girl fell for a carhop named Robert Martin Gunn. Cheryl was sent to El Retiro School for Girls, where girls with a history of delinquency lived in the San Fernando Valley. But Cheryl ran away from El Retiro twice. After she had been caught the second time, Police Chief Anderson said, "When she first came in here, after the Stompanato murder, she was just a confused, frightened kid. But now she's a real tough little kid who's going to need a lot of straightening out." Her language to the arresting officers would have sounded rough if it came from Johnny Stompanato himself.

After several private schools, where she also got into difficulty, Cheryl was permitted to go home to her mother in January 1961. But a wild drinking party with two other girls, one of whom was dressed like a boy, showed that Cheryl needed a lot of help.

And Lana Turner was living with her fifth husband, Fred May, a sportsman, at his horse ranch near Pomona.

At the time of the wedding, in November, 1960, Lana said, "I know it's going to be a happy marriage. Five has always been my lucky number."

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XI — Elizabeth Taylor: *The Eternal Triangles*

ONE SCANDAL is usually about four-tenths of a scandal more than the public will permit a movie star to enjoy. Elizabeth Taylor's had two, and she is, after all, only thirty years old. She has a great career behind her, and who can tell what lies ahead?

Born in the outskirts of London on February 27, 1932, to Francis Taylor, an Illinois-born art dealer, and Sara Warmbraten, who had been an actress under the name of Sothern, Elizabeth Taylor was brought to the United States by her parents in 1939, when war broke out in Europe. Her father then took over the management of an art gallery in the Beverly Hills Hotel.

It was a heaven-sent opportunity for Liz's mother, whose own acting ambitions had been frustrated by her domestic duties. She was determined to get her daughter into motion pictures. She managed to talk Universal Pictures into signing a contract for her moppet, who was then eight years old. In *Man or Mouse* she sang a duet with Alfalfa Switzer, who was supposed to be funny. It was a picture not usually mentioned in Liz's press releases, but then, anyone might be excused for wanting to forget it. When it was over, the studio decided they'd had as much of Elizabeth Taylor as they wanted. They kept paying her parents two hundred dollars a week until her year's contract was up, but they didn't bother to pick up her option.

Mrs. Taylor went looking for more work for daughter Liz. But it was her husband who found Liz's next role. An air raid warden, he was with two other wardens one day, shortly after Pearl Harbor, when one of them, who happened to be

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producer Sam Marx of M-G-M, mentioned his search for a little girl actress who liked dogs. One thing led to another, and the next day Liz was signed to appear in *Lassie, Come Home*. She got reasonably good notices in it. Then came roles in *White Cliffs of Dover* and *Jane Eyre*. Little Liz obviously had a good start on a career in films now.

At twelve she was cast as the lead in *National Velvet*, a story about a girl's love for a horse. It was a tremendous hit, is still considered one of Hollywood's best films. It made Liz Taylor a star. At thirteen, she was earning seven hundred and fifty dollars a week.

At fourteen, she discarded her schoolgirl's garb for a low-cut dress from which she threatened to burst at any moment. She already had the bust of a woman. Her measurements at that age were 37½-20-36. At fifteen, she was on the cover of *Life* and was voted by Annapolis midshipmen "The Girl We'd Abandon Ship for."

At sixteen, Liz became "engaged to be engaged" to Army Lieutenant Glenn Davis, onetime West Point football star then in his early twenties. He went off to the Korean War. While he was away, Liz met William Pawley, Jr., son of a rich oilman and financier. In June 1949 their engagement was announced. By September the engagement was off.

Then, in quick succession, the teenage movie queen dated Howard Hughes, Roddy McDowall, Vic Damone, Montgomery Clift (still one of her closest friends), and baseball star Ralph Kiner.

In 1950 Liz graduated from high school. The only boy friend she invited to attend was Nicky Hilton, then the twenty-two-year-old son of hotel magnate Conrad Hilton. Three months after completing work on *Father of the Bride* Liz married Nicky. The ceremony was performed in a Catholic church, because Nicky was Catholic, but there was not a nuptial Mass because Liz was Protestant. Before the honeymoon was over they were having difficulties. The marriage lasted just 214 days.

It was not long afterwards that Liz Taylor spoke a truth that has been recalled on many occasions since:

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"I have a woman's body and a child's emotions."

In 1951 Liz went to England to make *Ivanhoe*. On her first day in London, she received a visit from Michael Wilding, whom she'd first met at M-G-M when she was sixteen, which was only three years earlier. He was thirty-nine then, and in the process of getting a divorce. Six days before Liz's twentieth birthday, in 1952, she married Wilding. The following year she bore him a son, Michael Howard Wilding. In 1955 a second son, Christopher Edward Wilding, was born. Sixteen months later the Wildings broke up.

The day after their announcement, producer Mike Todd asked Liz to come to his office. There he told her, "I love you. I've been thinking about you constantly. Don't go out with anyone else. You're gonna marry me."

And he did.

He was forty-seven in 1957, and she was twenty-four, and she had been single for all of seventy-two hours when they were married at Acapulco. Cantinflas, the great Mexican comedian, was one of the witnesses.

The other witnesses were Eddie Fisher and his wife, Debbie Reynolds.

Little more than a year later, Mike Todd was killed in the crash of his private plane. He had left Liz with a baby girl, Liza Todd.

In her mourning Liz was comforted by Eddie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds, who had been very close to her and Mike. The second of the Fishers' children, Todd Emmanuel Fisher, was named for Mike.

Five months after Mike's death, Liz was in New York, stopping over on her way from Paris to Hollywood. Eddie, then thirty, went east on a business trip. He was supposed to stay four days. He stayed fourteen. And spent them with Liz.

They went to night clubs together, took long drives out on Long Island, and wound up by spending a very extended Labor Day weekend at Grossinger's, a popular resort in the Catskills. By that time Earl Wilson, one of the top Broadway columnists, who had been carrying items hinting at a

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romance, broke into print with a headline news story suggesting that the absent Debbie had lost herself a husband to the widow Todd. The other newspapers and wire services picked up the story, and soon *Time, Life,* and *Newsweek* were carrying the news.

At first Debbie, in Hollywood, tried to shrug off the reports. Then one day she went to the airport to meet Eddie's plane. It arrived, but he wasn't on it. Debbie got angry. "I am deeply shocked from what I have read in the papers," she said, but she wouldn't say more—then.

The day after Eddie finally arrived back in Hollywood—with Liz—Eddie and Debbie separated. Liz insisted she was no home-wrecker. "You can't break up a happy marriage," said she. This was hailed as profound thinking by some sloppy sentimentalists; any psychologist could have told how untrue it was.

When Hedda Hopper asked Liz what the not-long-dead Mike Todd would have said, Liz made a revealing comment: "Mike is dead and I'm alive."

A storm of criticism broke over Liz Taylor's head. Elsa Maxwell summed up the feelings of Liz's critics when she said, "The facts seemed to me to prove she has been aggressive in her romances, ruthless in her disregard for the feelings of those who have stood in her path and indifferent to the wreckage she has left behind her."

Debbie was the wronged wife, mother of Eddie's two children, Eddie was the selfish, lecherous, and rather stupid husband, and Liz was the cold-blooded other woman. The newspapers and magazines whooped it up, and the public overwhelmingly agreed with them.

But the hubbub didn't hurt Liz's career one bit. The public had changed, matured. It was coming to understand that a work of art of any kind—even a movie—should be judged on its own merits, not on the virtues of the artist. The moviegoers continued to flock to Liz's movies. Her price went up to the highest level any actor had ever enjoyed—one million dollars for a single picture, *Cleopatra.*

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On May 12, 1959, a month and a half after she had adopted the Jewish faith, Liz Taylor married Eddie Fisher. He was filling a singing engagement in Las Vegas at the time.

From that point, however, his career went downhill. His network television program was dropped because of declining ratings. He thereafter spent most of his time going with his wife where her motion picture assignments led or holding her hand on the frequent occasions when she was sick. She is subject to illnesses, including periodic depressed states.

It was largely sympathy for her illness, in the opinion of most Hollywood people, that won her an Oscar in 1961, although the award was supposed to be for *Butterfield 8*. In September, 1960 they arrived in England, where Liz was to begin work on *Cleopatra*. In November a tooth infection that spread to her nervous system forced a delay in the filming. Early in 1961, work on the movie was resumed, but in March she fell ill again, this time with pneumonia.

The drivel that was being printed then was sickening. Liz wasn't a monster any more; she was an angel, all of a sudden. She was the most beautiful woman in the world (although everyone knew she'd been going to fat in recent years), the best actress (although even her most ardent admirers had to call her a "primitive" in style), the most lovable of women.

The truth, of course, was that Liz was neither saint nor Satan; she was a woman, the object of attention all her life, who was completely unequipped to cope with the ordinary challenges and restraints that civilized living imposes on one.

That became obvious when work was resumed on *Cleopatra*. In the hope of protecting Liz's health in a sunny climate, the production was moved to Italy.

It was not long before Liz's second scandal hit the headlines. She was in another triangle—but this time Eddie Fisher was the square of the hypotenuse, or something. The angle guy was Richard Burton, who already had a wife and kids back in London.

For weeks Eddie tried to pretend that he wasn't aware of how Marc Antony and Cleopatra were loving it up. Then he tried to bluster. Then he played for sympathy. Finally he flew back to New York and slipped secretly in to the psychiatric pa-

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vilion of a hospital. When it was learned he was there, he insisted that everything was all right between him and Liz; he'd just come back "for a rest."

After he left Rome, Liz and Burton cast discretion to the winds and began dating openly every night. Burton would escort her home to her villa.

Finally Liz sent for her lawyer, Louis Nizer, and told him she wanted him to arrange for a divorce from Eddie. In New York, Fisher reluctantly held a press conference and admitted that in Liz's eternal game of amatory tag, he was It. Their lawyers began to work on the details of the divorce.

Meanwhile Burton's wife, Sybil, who was used to her husband's passing fancies, got together with him a few times in Paris and Rome, just to make sure that he didn't begin to take Liz too seriously. Apparently she was successful. Liz, who had been telling her friends that Burton was going to be husband No. 5, abruptly dropped that line of talk. She and Burton had a few public spats, in which he treated her rather contemptuously.

From the first intimations of the Liz-Eddie-Richard triangle, however, denunciations of Liz had mounted. Even the Vatican, usually aloof from such matters, condemned her. The producers of *Cleopatra* began to worry. It looked as though this scandal might finally prove damaging.

In Washington, several Congressmen asked the House Rules Committee to authorize an investigation of sex in movies. Representative Joseph P. Addabbo (Democrat of New York) said the off-screen conduct of some celebrities set a bad example for the youth of the nation.

"I'd like to suggest that Anthony and Cleopatra were angels compared to what is going on in Rome between Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton," he told the Rules Committee.

Representative Iris F. Blitch (Democrat of Georgia) added the asinine suggestion that the Attorney General should determine whether Liz, an American citizen, or Burton, a Briton, could be barred from the United States for misconduct.

After forty years of scandals, there were still, it appeared, some people who felt themselves fit to cast the first stone, who

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thought the morals of the artist affected the quality of the artwork. An investigation of Washington's morals could probably uncover more sin than Hollywood harbors—but Hollywood doesn't investigate Washington, unfortunately.

Maybe that's what's wrong with *both* Hollywood and Washington!

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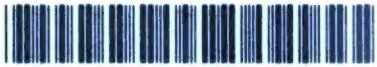

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